7-1-2012

From the Margins to the Middle: Making Room for Visual Rhetoric in the Composition Classroom

Montyne H. Morris
Kennesaw State University, mmorri69@kennesaw.edu

From the Margins to the Middle:

Making Room for Visual Rhetoric in the Composition Classroom

By

Montyne H. Morris

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the

Requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Professional Writing

in the

Department of English in the

College of Humanities and Social Sciences of Kennesaw State

University

Kennesaw, Georgia

2012

College of Humanities & Social Sciences

Kennesaw State University

Kennesaw, Georgia

Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the Capstone Project of

Montyne H. Morris

Has been approved by the committee

For the capstone requirement for the Master of Arts in

Professional Writing in the Department of English

At the August 2012 graduation

Capstone committee:

Member

Member

Acknowledgements

I would not have been able to complete my capstone project without the genuine support and contributions of many people. My graduate experience at Kennesaw has been rewarding, as I have had the pleasure of working with many gifted and caring individuals, only a few of whom I can mention here.

First, I'd like to thank my capstone committee members, Dr. Elizabeth Giddens and Dr. Mary Lou Odom. Their support and guidance throughout this process has been invaluable. They provided prompt and honest feedback and asked the right questions to keep me on track even as I changed the goals of my project many times. Before they were my advisors, Dr. Giddens and Dr. Odom were simply two smart, engaging professors in the MAPW faculty at Kennesaw. I loved being a student in their classes and am grateful that they have shared their time and talents with me in so many ways.

I'd also like to thank my fellow TAs, most of whom I have outlasted! I was proud to be part of such an exciting initiative; together, we learned from our students, our teachers, and each other and had a great time. I appreciate their individual and united support.

Special thanks go to my employers and close friends, Dutch and Kathleen Earle. Whether I needed time off to attend class, grade papers, or write a capstone, they were always flexible, gracious, and supportive. I'm sure they are (almost) as relieved as I am to have this journey completed.

Finally, I cannot put into words how grateful I am to have such a loving and supportive family—my husband Jeff, daughter Sarah, and son Will. They never complained, as housework, laundry, and even meals were neglected in the name of education. Of course, not all the days in my six-year journey were long and hectic; but plenty were. They have been unbelievably patient, and I am immensely indebted. It is with a thankful heart that I say to them, "I love you," and with great relief that I can say, "I'm all yours!"

Table of Contents

Introduction: On the Path(s) to Becoming a Writer 1
Chapter One: Rationale 15
Outlining the Goals 16
Restricting the Role of Images in Composition 19
Looking for Opportunities 21
Preparing Students for Future Writing 24
Valuing Images 28
Relating the Results 30
Chapter Two: Literature Review 32
Listening to the Experts 33
Clarifying Objectives 40
Anticipating Resistance 46
Chapter Three: Pedagogy 51
Considering Millennials 52
Learning from Experience 58
Experimenting with Assignments 64
Conclusion: Correcting Assumptions 67
Works Cited 71
Notes to Appendices 77
Appendix A 78
Appendix B 82
Appendix C 85
Appendix D 88
MONTYNE H. MORRIS 91

Introduction: On the Path(s) to Becoming a Writer

In 1995, when my two children were preschoolers, I left a corporate career to become a full-time mother and wife. Later, as the kids settled into elementary school, I looked for part-time work. We needed the extra money, but more than that, I wanted to regain that feeling of accomplishment that comes with outside employment. I found a position with a national time management organization as a facilitator and coach. Having left a career in training and development, I welcomed the opportunity to return to the adult classroom. After a couple of years, however, my boss sold his franchise in Atlanta and no longer needed an instructor. I found a new position as a recruiter/researcher with a small executive search firm in Roswell. It was not exactly my dream job; in fact, I quickly decided that I loved sourcing potential candidates, but did not actually want to call or interview them. Even though the work was not ideal, I stayed because the environment was nice and my commute was short. Most importantly, my work schedule was very flexible, which gave me time to tend my small family and volunteer often at our kids' elementary school.

I became very active in PTA and was on the elementary and middle school boards for several years. A busy PTA generates quite a few documents throughout the year, and I was particular about every piece that went out with my name on it. As president, I felt the image we created was a reflection of me, and it was important that every document we produced—every memo, newsletter, article, notice, and calendar—be studiously edited for composition and design. My obsession became well known, and I earned a

reputation for being a good writer. Others recognized and complimented my ability to create communications that were reader friendly and that met the needs of our various audiences: parents, administrators, teachers, students, and community members. Between my corporate and volunteer positions, I have produced marketing materials, contracts, correspondence, newsletters, training manuals, job announcements, and more. Yet, I've never labeled myself a writer.

In 2006, after almost ten years of part-time work with the recruiting firm, I realized that both kids would be off to college soon. I would no longer need my part-time work schedule, but I would need a full-time income. More importantly, I was ready to find a position that was more suited to my skills and interests. I thought about the sort of job I wanted and the things I could do to make it happen. Looking over my adult life—the success I've enjoyed, my skill sets, and the tasks I like to do—I realized that I really wanted to write. Unlike many writers, I did not dream of writing the next best-selling novel. Instead, I wanted to write on behalf of an organization. Specifically, I thought I'd like to return to human resources, this time as a writer of internal communications, helping my organization inform its employees and build a sense of community.

I was concerned—and still am—that it would be hard for a, by then, fifty-something woman to land a job like the one I envisioned. I believed that I had the skills, but my resume did not reflect my experience or interest in writing. I reasoned that I could compensate for my lack of paid writing experience with a modern, advanced degree in the field. I have always loved being a student, and once I found the Master of Arts in Professional Writing (MAPW) program at Kennesaw State University (KSU), I made my decision. Within weeks, I had taken the GRE and applied to the program, with a declared

concentration in applied writing and a support area in composition and rhetoric. My application writing samples included a PTA newsletter, an article I'd written for *Atlanta Parent Magazine*, and a poem I penned just for the application, titled "A Verse of Panic." My samples weren't dazzling, but they must have been good enough; I was accepted. I enrolled in KSU immediately and began my first graduate-level course.

Issues and Research, a prerequisite for all MAPW students, provided a perfect introduction—a fitting point of entry into a graduate writing program. I thought my professor was brilliant. I also found her to be funny and tough, but fair, and most importantly, willing to help me rejoin the ranks of academia. I was the oldest student in class; I think my bachelor's degree was older than some of my classmates. I must have followed MLA guidelines in those undergraduate courses of long ago, but I did not remember them; my first graduate essays looked more like business memos—unconventional, at best. The terminology was also unfamiliar. What was rhetoric, anyway? One of our first assignments was to analyze Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." I dutifully read King's text and tried to explain how and why I thought he wrote certain passages; but I did not know they were rhetorical strategies. I discussed King's reputation, his character, and his credibility, without once referring to his ethos. Later in the semester, I found myself overwhelmed with stacks of research and only a vague idea how to compose my final project. While my classmates participated in peer review—another alien concept—I was gently directed to haul my mixed-up self and my mountain of research to the corner workstation to create some kind of outline for my essay. I finally did catch on, and I earned my first A in graduate school. I also rekindled my love of English and writing and listening to smart, engaging professors.

As the adage goes, the hardest part of any journey is the first step; I had taken that first tentative step and was poised to continue. Over the next several semesters, I would take fourteen more classes in applied writing, composition, and rhetoric—with one discouraging foray into creative writing—for a total of 45 graduate hours. I would attend the Summer Institute of the Kennesaw Mountain Writing Project, tutor in the KSU Writing Center and complete seven graduate research assistantships, including four as a teaching assistant. According to the Greek poet Constantine P. Cavafy, "When you set out on your journey to Ithaca, pray that the road is long, full of adventure, full of knowledge." Well, I wasn't headed to Ithaca; nevertheless, my MAPW journey has been long, full of adventure, and full of knowledge. What follows is a reflection on some of the most valuable experiences of my graduate career and, ultimately, of my journey to becoming a professional writer.

Most of my courses, at least initially, were in applied writing; they offered practical knowledge and skills that directly prepared me to write using different tools for a variety of purposes and audiences. As could be expected, all my courses were interrelated, building on one another or providing different perspectives of a subject. For instance, two courses—Writing for the Web and Social Media—required the study and use of new software and Web applications. In one class, I learned enough about Web design and publishing to create a model Web site complete with text, visuals, sound, hyperlinks, and working navigation, for my recruiting office. In the other, I completed a social media plan—from analysis to action plans—for a prospective client. Even though my firm never launched the Web site and I never shared the social media plan with my phantom client, working on those projects gave me exposure to and experience in writing

for the Web. While I was skeptical and sometimes frustrated having to manage so many new tools, I knew that to be a contemporary business writer, I would have to know at least a little about Web design and these emerging applications.

After years of pseudo-editing for friends and coworkers, I intended to finally learn the proper techniques from a pair of editing courses. In Business and Technical Editing, I confirmed that I really loved to edit and seemed to have a talent for it. As a novice editor, however, I wanted to discuss every editing decision: what was wrong in the text? Was it grammatically incorrect or a style preference? What were all the possible edits? And, how much editing was too much? I learned a valuable and marketable skill, even if, in this online class, I missed interacting with my teacher and classmates. The second course, Business and Academic Editing, was less about editing fundamentals and more about situating the editing function in the publishing industry. We studied how a book moves from author to editor to publisher to bookstore. I was fascinated to learn trade secrets and insider tips from my professors, who both had enjoyed a career in publishing. I believe this academic duo has adequately prepared me for an entry-level editing role, should I choose to pursue such a position. However, my own writing will improve, the more I can think like an editor and objectively assess my own work.

That first editing course also provided my first opportunity to work with a client. I created a style manual for the *Journal of Executive Education*, one of four journals printed by the Kennesaw State University Press. It was gratifying to discuss with a client how I could contribute to a genuine, commercial project. At least two other classes—Writing in Organizations and Feature Writing—provided additional opportunities for client engagement. I worked with the Prevention Intervention Center, an assistance

program sponsored by the Cobb County School District, to develop a comprehensive marketing plan that would raise community awareness of the center and its services. In a separate project, I worked with Dean Vengroff of KSU's College of Humanities and Social Sciences to prepare articles, profiles, and press releases about a potential new Ph.D. program in International Policy. Finally, I worked on several feature stories for the Global Center for Social Change in the WellStar College of Health and Human Services.

Like so many class projects, these client projects were never fully resolved—I do not know how much of what I produced was ever published or used by these clients. This unfinished business—this unknowing—is a recurring theme as I reflect upon the volume of work I've completed over the years. Nevertheless, from these writing projects, I have gathered some important lessons. For instance, not all clients know what they want or need; sometimes a writer must help clients analyze their situations. Getting the right amount of information is critical, but often hard to accomplish. And, while some clients like to delegate their entire writing project, others prefer to stay intimately involved. For these reasons, I find it challenging, yet rewarding, to work with clients. I hope to write for paying clients in the future, and these first-hand experiences have given me practice in writing for, as well as managing, those prospective clients.

I remember a few classes not because they provided new skills, necessarily, but because they provided new, improved, and more mature perspectives. In World Englishes, for instance, I realized how naïve I had been in understanding our native language—languages in general, really. Languages are living organisms that develop, mature, and sometimes die; they are burdened with the histories of the people who use them and, at times, can serve as social, political, and economic gatekeepers. Intercultural

Communications in Contexts focused on multicultural writing. I had attended diversity training before, but here I learned that each element of a document—each word, symbol, or color—has an interpretation that is different for every county, and that organizations have to negotiate these differences carefully as they conduct business in each region. Just as I had taken English for granted, so had I taken the acquisition of my literacy practices. Introduction to Literacy Studies made me conscious of literacy as a commodity whose value was not absolute. How can we declare someone literate, when even trying to define the term is problematic? I did much self-reflection in this class, as I discovered the people and events that helped shape my literacy practices. I was surprised to learn, for instance, that having parents who read and who read to their children, as mine did, was a telling sign of my having grown up in a white, middle-class family.

Even these three, seemingly unrelated, classes shared a common theme. In its own way, each class helped me gain an expanded, more nuanced perspective on language and literacy. I can appreciate the extent and complexity of English usage around the world. I have renewed my appreciation for the freedom of speech we enjoy in the United States, while authors around the world are figuratively, and sometimes literally, silenced. Finally, I have been introduced to literacy, not just as I defined it or engaged in it, but as a broad range of concepts and practices. These classes helped me understand and appreciate the differences in readers—all the variables that ultimately affect our ability to communicate and connect. I trust that this understanding, this empathy, will be evident in whatever writing tasks I undertake.

In fall of 2007, after taking only three courses in as many semesters, I realized the steep cost ratio of my one-course-a-semester journey. I applied for a graduate research

assistantship (GRA) and became the student editor of *Writing Kennesaw*, the newsletter for First-Year Composition and the Writing Center. I authored a few items, edited others' submissions—an especially daunting task, considering the authors' credentials—and worked with University Relations to design a new logo and masthead that coordinated with those of other university publications and gave *Writing Kennesaw* a distinctive new look.

I accepted two additional non-teaching GRA positions over the next years. Under the direction of Dr. Sarah Robbins, I published the 2008 Annual Report for the American Literature Section of the Modern Language Association. Harnessing my recently updated skills, I researched historical data, wrote original content, solicited and edited articles by other Section members, and created visual interest with images of antique typeset. I acquired a working knowledge of InDesign, a feature-rich desktop publishing package I had never used. Later, I became student editor of *Writing Kennesaw* for a second time; this time, I found myself more comfortable with my editorial responsibilities than before. I knew more people in the department to solicit for ideas and articles; I was also a more seasoned writer and editor. I took the initiative to write articles on behalf of others, knowing that the newsletter was not a high priority item for them, but that I was working against a deadline.

My graduate research experiences gave me opportunities to practice doing exactly what I want to do professionally. For each publication, I assumed the role of author, editor, designer, and publisher. I managed the challenges of working with other writers and with unfamiliar tools, all while under the pressure of a deadline and being acutely aware of the educational and professional expertise of my audiences. Consequently, I was

able to add three professional publications to my writing portfolio, as a sort of tangible evidence of my academic journey.

In the summer of 2009, almost three years after beginning my graduate studies, the English department announced a new teaching assistant (TA) program. Though I had never thought about the possibility of becoming an instructor, I loved being part of a stimulating college environment; I felt confident in my writing abilities, based on my recent work in the program, and in my teaching abilities, based on my earlier training experience. I applied for and earned one of the first TA positions, which signaled a temporary departure from applied writing to composition. For the first time, I considered that I could devote my interests and skills as a writer to something other than editing or the production of writing. The TA position led me to a new discipline of study and a way to extend my writing practice by teaching.

My first semester as a TA, I shadowed Patty Cardona's English 1101 class and took Understanding Writing as a Process, the first of two composition courses required for teaching assistants. Instead of reading theories or producing documents for fabricated clients, in this course I was learning information that would become imminently useful. In just sixteen weeks, I would be in front of twenty-six student writers, so I was eager to learn about writing—not so much how to do it, but how to teach others to do it. I felt like a beginner all over again, learning terms, techniques, and important names in contemporary composition. For maybe the first time, I became aware of writing as a complex, cognitive process—so much more than the product of correct grammar and sentence structure. I began to think like a writing instructor—confirming, in a way, that I was, in fact, a writer—and to wonder if I would enjoy a long-term teaching role.

In spring, I began my own section of English 1101 and continued studying composition with Teaching Writing in High School and College—a highly instructive course that I wish I had completed prior to, instead of during, my first semester of teaching. Most of my classmates were fellow TAs, although not all of us had started teaching. Those of us who had were able to supplement class discussions with relevant classroom experience. The interaction among TAs and more experienced professors—in this class and in our TA practicum—benefitted both our graduate studies and our teaching; the composition classes and the practicum were indispensable resources for helping me manage my current composition class and prepare for my next one.

As part of my TA commitment, I tutored in the KSU Writing Center. It was not a position I particularly enjoyed. I liked meeting students and found most of them to be hard working and appreciative of my help. However, I disliked starting from scratch with every student—trying first to figure out his or her assignment and then to determine what help was needed. I became adept at using multiple reference tools to answer questions about grammar, formatting, and citations—a skill I secretly enjoyed demonstrating for my students. More importantly, I was exposed to a broad range of writing assignments. By helping students muddle through their various assignments, I learned the importance of writing clear directions, establishing a purpose, scaffolding assignments, and creating checkpoints that keep students on target. Such lessons are important for a writing instructor but also for a writer, as all writing should be clear and purposeful, and should build from readers' current knowledge.

In the summer after my first teaching assignment, I applied for a fellowship with the Summer Institute at the Kennesaw Mountain Writing Project, which essentially

became the final academic course in my MAPW career. For three weeks, we did nothing but write, read about writing, and talk about writing. A willing student, I enjoyed sharing information and stories with other teacher-writers. At times, though, I simply did not feel like writing, or rather, did not feel like writing on the topic or in the genre of the day. My time at the Summer Institute, like my time at the Writing Center, positioned me as a student writer. I was mindful of being in my students' shoes and remembered how it felt to write on demand, with contrived prompts and tight schedules. I acknowledged the importance of a supportive writing environment, the difference of writing with a pen and paper instead of a keyboard, the necessity of in-class writing, and the fear of writing in new, unfamiliar genres. Remembering those feelings and trying to account for them as I designed and implemented my own classes made me a better teacher.

I returned in the fall with fresh ideas for 52 new student writers. I assigned what I hoped were stimulating readings and discussion prompts and worked to create positive writing events. I was disappointed to find out that in spring I would teach English 1102, the more research-based second half of first-year composition. I was still adjusting to the demands of my new role and looked forward to improving upon what I had started. To my surprise, I liked teaching 1102. Even though I missed the diverse writing assignments of 1101, 1102 lent itself to more in-depth and sustained topics. I learned a lot by helping my students find a worthy topic and explore it for several weeks.

I believe in writing to learn—students think critically and formulate their ideas and perspectives once they begin to articulate them. Students must discover that truth for themselves, yet only a small number of assignments in first-year writing programs

demand the required level of effort. In 1102, I think a few of my students were able to reach that level of writing, and I was glad that I was there to help facilitate it.

When I began my journey toward a master's degree, composition and rhetoric had been only a supporting concentration. I saw myself as an applied writer, with no intentions or expectations about teaching. However, the teaching assistantship was a natural fit for me and provided an invigorating and gratifying supplement to my studies. I learned so much about writing from my professors, classmates, fellow TAs, and students. I found teaching to be incredibly rewarding and I believe my time in front of the classroom has contributed significantly to my understanding of writing, both as the result of action as well as the action itself, the process.

I have one final class to acknowledge, not because it was the best or the worst, the last or the first, but because it gave a name to a theory—for lack of a better term—that has captured my interest since high school. In a dimly lit auditorium at journalism camp, I was completely mesmerized by images—projected from three parallel and precisely synchronized slide projectors—and music—Kiki Dee's, "I've Got the Music in Me." Sounds corny now, but it made a lasting impression. Furthermore, it made that impression using no words, other than the song lyrics, which were incidental. It was a dramatic example of visual rhetoric.

What is visual rhetoric? Defining the term is as easy as herding a clowder of cats; virtually impossible to do, but fun and interesting to attempt. Such was my Visual Rhetoric course. In this small and engaging class, we studied graphics, sculptures, paintings, advertisements, and even texts, trying to determine which of their elements had been intentionally designed and which had been natural or incidental. We debated—yet

never resolved— whether a mountain sunset or a city skyline could have inherent rhetorical value.

I remember how excited I felt as I composed my favorite class project. In an attempt to make a statement about the impossibility of the ideal woman, I dissected six pictures—stereotypical images of women from *Time Magazine* covers—and glued them to the individual sections of a Rubik's cube. During my presentation, I let classmates tinker with the cube until the single-story, stereotypical images meshed together, creating what I contended was a real woman. My classmates got it; they seemed to understand my visual statement without explanation.

By now, I was firmly entrenched in my writing program; this class re-awakened me to the power of visuals and helped plant the seed for my capstone. I became interested in how visuals contribute to communication, alone and in conjunction with texts. I began evaluating all sorts of media to determine whether their use of visuals was beneficial or detrimental to their overall messages. Though it would be awhile before I formulated a thesis, I knew then that my capstone project would somehow relate to visual images.

It was two years after that class before I began working on my capstone in earnest. Unfortunately, I enrolled in those first official hours right in the middle of my teaching assistantship; I discovered the only downside to teaching was the time and effort it took away from my capstone. I spent considerable hours on lesson plans and grading, knowing that four times a week, I would face a room full of expectant and deserving students. Teaching was more fun than researching. It was easy—and, I thought, necessary—to put off working on that long-term project. Even though I felt justified neglecting my capstone at the time, I failed to realize that completing it would only

become more challenging, once I left campus. With no reason to be on campus, I lost contact with my support group of fellow students and professors. Work on my capstone stalled again, not for lack of time but lack of interest. My enthusiasm waned; the drive to complete my research was difficult to maintain and I often lost sight of my original purpose. Knowing that my circumstances were self-induced did not diminish their impact.

Finally, with the approval of my capstone committee and the successful defense of my thesis, my time in the MAPW program is drawing to a close. It's been almost six years since I registered for my first graduate writing class. With my youngest child starting college this fall, it is time for me to get serious about finding a more rewarding and lucrative position. I have fortified my resume with a new degree; I possess new knowledge and experience and a small portfolio that demonstrates my skills. Now I must enter the job search and, like so many writers, try to find an employer that needs what I have to offer. Whether my next role is in teaching, editing, writing, or all of the above, I will be more successful because of my rather non-traditional journey through the MAPW program.

Chapter One: Rationale

A couple of years ago, I was struck by the clarity with which my first-year composition students explained visual arguments that they had created. Loosely patterned after a similar example from a fellow instructor, the visual argument assignment had been an afterthought—something that could be accomplished in the little time we had left until the end of the semester. I asked students, after they completed their research essays, to prepare visual presentations of their arguments. This assignment complemented my goal of teaching them to compose for different audiences, and I thought students would enjoy presenting their research in a new way.

I expected the usual distribution of results: interested and committed students would perform well, while less motivated students produced minimal work. I did not anticipate much difference between the students' visual presentations and their essays. Surprisingly, students' presentations did not follow the pattern set by their earlier writing assignments; on average, they were much improved. Students whose essays had earned mediocre grades described their visual arguments with more enthusiasm and more conviction than they had been able to muster in their written compositions. Once they added visuals to support their theses, many students were able to describe and justify their arguments more completely, making their visually supported arguments stronger than their written counterparts. While not every student experienced the same level of improvement, a significant number presented visual arguments that were notably more successful than the ones they defended in essay form the week before.

I suspect several factors contributed to this improved demonstration of argument. Students may have been energized by presenting to a live, larger, and more diverse audience that included classmates and other virtual stakeholders. Also likely, by finishing their essays, some students finally discovered what it was they wanted to say; when students revisit their texts—whether for the purpose of designing a visual or writing a revision—they generally improve it. Another possible factor is that students may have felt more freedom to discuss their arguments outside the conventions of a formally written essay. More controlled investigation would be necessary to determine the exact influence of each of these variables (and possible others). However, in my modest experience, students' arguments were stronger when they were supported by a second visual element such as a poster, slide, or video. I was curious about the source of their newfound confidence.

Outlining the Goals

I have been encouraged by my own experimentation, as well as by recent and expanded literature on composing with visuals, to investigate the place of visual images in the composition classroom and to explore the actual and potential intersections of composition studies and visual rhetoric. In an inherently verbal field—where words, sentences, and indented paragraphs are standard currency—can we make room for the non-verbal? Should writing instructors teach a full range of communication skills or should words be their only resource? When students write, are they composing or attending to a single step in a larger process of composition?

The term "visual" is not new to composition. It most frequently appears before the term "analysis," to indicate a genre of writing that is familiar to most first-year

composition programs. After learning to identify rhetorical strategies in texts, students are often asked to do a visual analysis, where the subject text is replaced by a visual image. Because the term visual is so highly contextual in this instance, it is rarely defined. In fact, some students may have the impression that a visual is a print advertisement, since that is so often the focus of visual analysis exercises.

While a print advertisement is indeed, a visual image, it is only one of many examples. For the purpose of this project, when I use the term "visual," or "visual image," I am referencing a broad group that is defined not by what its members are—a map, a photograph, a chart—but for how they make their information available, not verbally, but through visible elements such as color, line, texture, and perspective.

Another defining quality of a visual image, for the purpose of this project, is that it has been (re)created by a person. A sunset, though we see it with our eyes, would not be considered a visual image under this definition. However, once a painter or photographer recreates that scene on canvas or film, it would; the image is now a collection of visual design choices made by its creator. It should be noted also, that a page of nothing but verbal text falls within our working definition. The writer or producer of that text made choices about everything that is visible—from the font style, size, and color to the page layout and amount of white space. Together, those design elements form a visual image, although one that is frequently neglected in the study of visual rhetoric.

The goal of this project is to determine what role, if any, visual rhetoric—the rhetorical study of visual images—has, or should have, in first-year writing programs, such as the one at Kennesaw State University (KSU). My experience as a teaching assistant in the first-year composition program has raised several questions about how

KSU and other first-year programs prepare students for a life of writing. Generally, I believe there is a disconnect between the instruction students need and the instruction offered by most first-year programs. Further, I consider the lack of attention to visual literacy—the study of how we think, learn, and communicate using visuals—to be the Achilles' heel of traditional first-year writing programs. Until the discipline makes significant changes in the way it responds to visuals in composition—not just in theory but also in practice—it remains vulnerable to questions about the relevancy of first-year programs.

Over the last several decades, advancements in writing technologies and digital photography have significantly changed the way we communicate. Printing and document production have shifted from industry professionals to the public. Concurrently, or maybe consequently, we have exchanged words for images. In *A Primer for Visual Literacy*, author and graphic designer Donis A. Dondis acknowledges, "Print is not dead yet, nor will it ever be, but, nevertheless, our language-dominated culture has moved perceptibly toward the iconic"(7). Yet first-year composition (FYC) programs seem determined to continue their tradition of privileging the printed word. In this paper, I seek to narrow the gap between the language-dominated FYC classroom and the image-rich culture surrounding it. I hope to provide FYC faculty and administrators with awareness of the need for change and some ideas for making that change happen.

After offering my experience as a teaching assistant and my observations relevant to visual images, composition instruction, and student performance, in Chapter Two, I consider current literature in both visual rhetoric and composition and try to identify areas where the two disciplines align. I compare the goals and objectives of a few first-

year writing programs and survey the guiding principles of the professional organizations that inform them. In Chapter Three, I examine some contemporary research about the students we teach and about teaching visual rhetoric assignments. Historians Neil Howe and William Strauss identify millennials as those individuals born between 1982 and 1998 (11); the majority of our current students represent the middle of the millennial generation. Howe and Strauss believe that the millennial generation, like every generation, exhibits unique, identifiable traits and behaviors. Are they unique in what they expect from college or in what colleges and businesses expect of them? Should our understanding of millennials change FYC principles or practice?

Also in Chapter Three, I consider challenges that may cause some writing instructors to resist teaching visual rhetoric and summarize expert guidelines to help willing instructors bring visual rhetoric into their composition classrooms. In accordance with those guidelines, I include sample assignments in the appendices that I have used or plan to use in my first-year classes to get students more involved with the interpretation and production of visuals.

Restricting the Role of Images in Composition

As a first-time instructor, I spent a great deal of time developing lessons for my composition classes; I reviewed dozens of handbooks, readers, and rhetorics to find ideas for readings and assignments. I shamelessly hoarded activities from others who were more experienced, knowledgeable, and creative. As I look back on that preparation, I recognize that the discourse of first-year composition (FYC) and the exercises in most composition textbooks—at least those with which I was familiar—afforded little attention to visual images. Many writing textbooks failed to mention visuals at all, while others

confined any discussion about visual images to their service as objects of visual analyses—a common FYC assignment.

At the time, I did not question either the lack of visual image discussion or the restricted role of images in most textbooks. On the contrary, I followed this prescription in my first class and limited our discussion of visual images to analysis and the study of someone else's images—usually with respect to advertising, an obvious target for analysis. I took my first visual analysis unit right from the textbook. At the time, I was using *Good Reasons*, by Lester Faigley and Jack Selzer, which offered a tired-looking, text-heavy 16-page chapter on analyzing visual arguments that included a convenient five-step plan to write an analysis. Looking back, this first lesson was uninspired, and not all students did as well as I had expected on the analysis essay.

The following semester, I spent more time discussing visuals and visual design in preparation for the visual analysis assignment. This time, I was using the textbook *Writing Arguments* by John Ramage, John Bean, and June Johnson, which offered a much more comprehensive treatment of visual analysis and visual argument. Ramage, Bean, and Johnson devoted 35 pages to discussions of basic document and visual design, including a wide range of colorful, contemporary examples.

As we moved through the lesson, I asked students to conduct online searches to find other examples. Students seemed to enjoy working with images and competed to find the most outrageous and most shocking examples; it was challenging to keep them on task. Students were able to describe their emotional reactions to various kinds of multi-mediated images. With a little prompting, they could further identify the source—the part(s) of the image that influenced their reactions. Our discussion on visual design

had given students new terminology for describing their images. Students learned how photographs, graphics, and even text, can function rhetorically. They enjoyed identifying the hidden messages in advertisements and began to understand how easily images can be created to manipulate viewers.

Even though the visual analysis unit was popular with students, I realized that my instruction was helping to preserve the conventional placement of visuals as objects—images created by someone else, silently waiting for student analysis. Because our culture is increasingly image-driven, I agree that visual analysis is a necessary twenty-first century skill. However, asking students why an American flag flies in the background of a car advertisement is different—and requires different skills—than asking them to compose a message that viewers will associate with American values. Analysis skills are only a portion of what we owe our students; they also need to become creators of images, able to use visuals in ways that support their own communication goals.

Looking for Opportunities

Over the next few semesters, I looked for additional opportunities to incorporate visuals in the writing process and in my composition classroom. I began offering simple, low-risk exercises. For example, in March 2011, after Japan suffered a devastating earthquake and tsunami, I asked students to search for a single photograph that they felt captured the event and then to write a few sentences defending their selections. In another example, I asked teams of students to present the content of a chapter to their classmates, using slides or some other type of visual. One semester, I invited students to submit one of four reading responses in visual form, though, apparently, no one was brave enough to select this unconventional option.

It is worth noting, while students generally were successful completing visual analyses, and while their visual arguments were often stronger than their formal essays, this does not mean that students grasped a comprehensive understanding of how to interpret or create visually integrative messages. Students sometimes tried to assign a message or position to images that held none. For instance, a picture of a puppy's face with no surrounding context—even if that face is cut and bruised—fails to make an argument against animal abuse. Students often jumped to conclusions based not on what they could actually see in an image, but on what they read into it, given their personal, and narrow frames of reference. A readiness to base conclusions on perceived versus existing information and to accept information out of context are dangerous habits that I have observed in students, regardless of how the information is received. Like words, images carry cultural and political biases; just as writing instructors teach students how to look critically at written texts, so should we teach them to look at texts that offer additional mediation through sound and image.

Visuals created by students were not always engaging or rhetorically purposeful. While Microsoft's PowerPoint, a perennial favorite in presentation software, offers sophisticated technological capability, it does not teach users how to make rhetorical choices. It cannot suggest substituting an illustration for a description, for instance, or know that the user's audience is culturally biased against particular colors and symbols. Consequently, many users, including some of my tech-savvy students, place entire paragraphs of text on a single slide and think that because it is in color, it creates an effective visual. Students who added images to their presentations were content, as many

people are, to use generic pictures that were highly recognizable, such as a dollar sign or smiley face, but offered little content-specific support.

Even though I spent a few class periods each semester discussing visual design and analysis, I wish I could have taken more time to teach students how to create and use visuals more meaningfully, in ways that supported, rather than merely adorned, their content. To be sure, I am not suggesting sweeping changes of the sort that could prompt anyone to mistake a course in first-year composition with one in visual design. Nevertheless, I think it is important for first-year students to learn how to compose a powerful, rhetorically complex message using whatever tools are available and appropriate for their situations. And I think as writing instructors, we must find a way to deliver that learning.

I found that most of my students were experienced users of desktop publishing and other software that allow them to manipulate text and images. They could easily create multimodal projects—those which combine multiple modalities, such as verbal text, images, and sounds—and had done so for other classes and for their more socially-driven writing practices. To engage and entertain friends, a student might take a picture with a smart phone, upload it to Instagram, manipulate it with filters and frames, compose a caption, and post the newly mediated image to a social networking site such as Facebook or Twitter. Realize too, that sequence was accomplished in roughly the same amount of time it has taken to read this passage. Meanwhile, in writing class, the teacher may ask that same tech-savvy student to express his or her ideas using a single mode of delivery: alphabetic text printed on paper. The student's motivation to share weekend activities is probably greater than the motivation to complete classwork; this may

influence the student's choice of tools and platforms. Nevertheless, writing instructors who insist on text-only delivery methods risk having students perceive their assignments as outdated and irrelevant.

After observing students' skills and their apparent enjoyment in composing with multiple elements, I wondered if I could build more opportunities for them to communicate using a mix of images and text. Excited about the prospect of creating a more image-conscious classroom, I questioned whether I might be over-stepping some boundary—real or imagined—of my course. It was a writing class, after all. Did the fact that I was teaching first-year composition restrict my students to composing only with text?

Preparing Students for Future Writing

Clearly, my students have shown sufficient technical skill and interest in multimodal production to justify assigning more visually complex projects. With practice, they could employ visuals as easily as words, considering them to be just another element, another of their available means of persuasion. Students could broaden their communications practices by incorporating rhetorically purposeful visuals; but where will they learn such skills? Is composition—both the discipline and the classroom—the right place for visual rhetoric?

I have often questioned whether ENGL 1101 and 1102—the first-year composition sequence at Kennesaw State University—adequately prepares students for their future writing challenges. Do these courses help students develop the skills they need to be successful as they write in the academic programs of their majors and in their later professions? The academic essay, for instance, endures as the quintessential assignment of FYC programs. An academic essay is one way for a student to exhibit his

scholarship to others within the academy; after he has read and thoughtfully considered the work of others, he is ready to contribute his own ideas. Hence, every student should learn to produce a well-researched, well-reasoned, conventionally produced essay.

However, critical reading and critical thinking can be evidenced in many ways. I submit that the essay is not the only, nor always the best, demonstration of a student's fluency in a particular subject. In their upper-division classes, students likely will be expected to produce not only academic essays, but also lab reports, executive overviews, and proposals—discipline-specific documents that are often rich with visuals such as photographs, tables, and illustrations. Yet, many FYC programs, including the program at Kennesaw State, continue to revolve around the production of the academic essay.

While I was teaching, I was also working on my master's degree and exploring career opportunities in writing and editing. As I scanned job postings, I recognized that in order to compete for the jobs I wanted, I would need a wider skill set. Many contemporary writing and editing jobs require Web design skills and experience in desktop and online publishing. It is not enough to write engaging copy; today's employers expect writers to upload, post, print, or otherwise publish such content. Given the expanding responsibilities of staff writers, I question whether FYC programs provide students with a similarly expanded range of composition skills.

I realize that few of my students are likely to pursue a career in writing; students who have such interests and talents often satisfy their college writing requirements through testing or advanced placement classes. Nevertheless, most of my students will spend a few more years in college, after which they will join the workforce. In both of these scenarios, as continuing students and later, as professionals in the field, they will be

expected to demonstrate effective written communication skills—skills which continue to evolve in accordance with the availability of new writing technologies. The production of academic writing—that which is undertaken as a display of knowledge for a prescribed audience—seems to have little in common with organizational writing, which serves many purposes and audiences and is represented by a variety of genres. If we define effective or successful communication as that which reaches the intended audience with the intended message, the research or academic essay is a successful product. As they move into organizational writing, students will continue to use academic writing skills; however, the product known as the academic essay will be replaced by a broad range of print and online publications.

In "The Art of Getting it Write," business consultant Patrick Forsyth argues that school "assists little" with the types of organizational writing most of us will do (78). Why then, should the academic essay continue as the primary focus of FYC programs? Could we, in fact should we, allow for alternate methods of composing—methods that feature a variety of text and non-text elements—that are more aligned with the writing students are doing outside of and after they leave the academy? I readily concede the value of teaching students to compose traditional academic essays. However, I believe students reap additional value from learning to use a variety of composition tools and processes. This conclusion is based on what I accomplished with my first-year students, as well as my anticipation of the kinds of writing they will likely perform after they leave my class.

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) is a national collaboration of education, business, community, and government leaders that seeks "to position 21st

century readiness at the center of US K12 education." In addition to the three Rs—which the group defines as core subjects such as English, reading, mathematics, science, history and geography—P21 has identified four Cs essential for success: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity ("Our Mission"). In its *Framework for 21st Century Learning*, P21 outlines the communication skills expected of twenty-first century students. Contemporary students are expected to "(1) articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts, (2) use communication for a range of purposes (e.g. to inform, instruct, motivate and persuade), and (3) utilize multiple media and technologies, and know how to judge their effectiveness a priori as well as assess their impact" ("Overview"). To meet these ideal learning outcomes, students will need instruction and practice with a variety of message-making tools and processes.

While the Partnership was established to improve education in kindergarten through twelfth grades, its findings and recommendations can be useful to colleges and universities who assume the burden of creating successful students and citizens. Regardless of their prior education, college graduates should be able to demonstrate the range of communication skills described by the Partnership. Beginning college students who already demonstrate the desirable range of skills should attend a first-year course that builds—or at the very least, maintains—their competencies. On the other hand, students who exhibit a limited range of skills upon entering college should receive instruction to develop the complete range of communication skills described in the Partnership's *Framework*.

Valuing Images

Composition is included in the general education programs at most U.S. colleges and universities. This means that regardless of their majors, graduates likely will have taken one or more writing classes during their academic careers. First-year composition classes, however, have no common curriculum; each university—often each instructor—determines the readings and assignments, the genres of writing practiced, and the expectations of student performance. Given the autonomous nature of FYC programs, it is easy to see how wide variations in subject matter exist from one course to the next; consistency in the study or application of a single unit, such as visual rhetoric, is improbable.

Most contemporary composition programs, however, share a common grounding in classical rhetoric—Aristotle's rhetoric—loosely and variably defined as the art of discourse, argument, or persuasion. Instructors guide students through the persuasive appeals of ethos, logos, and pathos. The rhetorical triangle—a simplistic representation of the three-part rhetorical situation—can be found in virtually every composition textbook. The canons of invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery become steps in the process that moves students from concept to finished, and in our case, written, product. Aristotle wrote volumes defining his understanding of persuasive discourse, but in the simplest of terms, he defined rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion." Since the means of persuasion available to the public, including our students, have been expanded by technology to include visual and aural components, writing teachers are obligated to include the same in our teaching of rhetoric.

Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, widely recognized leaders in the study of multimodality and how it influences communication, make a compelling case for educators to change their pedagogy and practice in response to the changes in the way we communicate. In *Reading Images*, they sum up our responsibilities in this way:

> If schools are to equip students adequately for the new semiotic order, if they are not to produce people unable to use the new resources of representation actively and effectively, then the old boundaries between the mode of writing on the one hand, and the "visual arts" on the other, need to be redrawn (32).

Remember the heartbreaking images of starving children in Africa, the fried egg that represented your brain on drugs, and the single tear of the American Indian paddling a littered stream. These images are indelible; they were powerful, enduring tools in their respective arguments against world hunger, drug abuse, and pollution. Certainly, individuals can be moved by spoken and written words; however, images can elicit responses that are often more immediate and intense. A viewer doesn't have to wait until the end of an argument—or even the end of a sentence—to arrive at his reaction to a visual. All the elements are immediately and simultaneously available. Designers compose images with the knowledge of how they are likely to be viewed—what will draw the viewer's attention first, for instance, or the path the eye will follow—but the image is not parsed out to the viewer like words of a sentence.

Donald Norman is a cognitive scientist and author of the book *Emotional Design*. Writing to user experience designers, the professionals who determine how humans interact with computers and other systems, Norman proposes that people advance through

three layers of cognitive processing when they use a product. The first layer is the "visceral," which is a response to visual or other sensory stimuli; Norman considers visceral processing the "most immediate." "Behavioral" processing comes next and manages our everyday behaviors; "reflective" processing then develops over time, once the user has had a chance to look back on his experience with the product (22). Norman's model leads to improved designs in user interfaces. However, I believe Norman's three levels of cognitive processing can inform our own discussion of images and composition. We can use images, alone or with text, to tap into that "visceral" processing and create a desirable viewer response. Because visual images have the capacity to generate quick, sometimes, subconscious reactions, they can create an effective means of persuasion. Thus, it becomes improbable, if not impossible, to eliminate visuals from one's rhetorical toolbox.

Relating the Results

This project should yield meaningful insights that can inform the work of first-year writing program designers, administrators, and instructors. I anticipate that educators who presently are undecided about the need for visual rhetoric in college writing will find reasons to decide. Others who have resolved the question of need but who may question the correct placement of instruction—whether visual rhetoric should be the responsibility of FYC—should find reason to support such positioning. My brief inquiry into millennial students is an invitation for everyone involved with the delivery of first-year programs to consider whether we are meeting the needs of these students, their professors, and their future employers. Finally, this project offers guidelines and ideas for those instructors who may be ready to implement their vision of a composition class where text and images are more integrated.

Fully realized, this project makes only baby steps toward a more relevant curriculum in first-year composition. As technology continues to drive our ability to incorporate multiple modes in the making of meaning, educators and scholars must continue to observe and question its effects. It becomes increasingly difficult to discuss multiple modalities as separate entities; the integration of text, images, and sounds will be so complete that we cannot talk of one without the others. Technology itself becomes an issue as we consider not what writers can do with it, but what it is doing to writers. I am also sensitive to whether this increased production capability and the technology it requires could widen the gap between those who have it (technology) and those who do not. The themes I have begun to explore—the rhetorical capacity of images and the potential for visual rhetoric in first year composition—should provide the curious reader multiple incentives for related and meaningful study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Visual images are everywhere, helping illustrate as well as create what is important in our culture. They serve multiple purposes, from aesthetic and pragmatic to benign and manipulative. Visually mediated images—text, graphics, pictures, and illustrations conceived and produced by humans—permeate our lives at home, at work, and everywhere in between. Every day, people passively consume hundreds of visual images and messages as we pass storefronts, bumper stickers, and road signs. We elect to receive hundreds more through televisions, computers, and smart phones as we race to acquire more, see more, and do more. The number of cable and satellite channels grows every day to keep up with a customer base that has grown from just over two million in 1975 to over 58 million in 2011 ("Basic Video Customers"); the social networking site Facebook is home to 90 billion images (Mitchell); and smartphone users can choose from over one million applications ("App Store Metrics").

The current generation of college students has grown up in this visually mediated world. From birth, they have been surrounded by more images than any other generation; by the time they reach college, they've seen millions. However, image immersion—whether passive or active, conscious or subconscious—does not translate into critical consumption. I found no evidence to suggest that students instinctively know how to analyze images or understand their influence. Elizabeth Daley, Executive Director of the Annenberg Center for Communication, agrees that we cannot assume that students have multimedia literacy just because they have grown up surrounded by multi-mediated

images. On the contrary, simply because they are so common, these images are often hard for students to analyze (37). Lacking the skills that would help them analyze the flood of images around them, students may fall prey to images designed to make them think and act in predictable ways.

Listening to the Experts

As images command more of our attention, there are even some indications that we are using fewer words. Writing for *The Futurist*, Lawrence Baines of the University of Oklahoma looks at five trends that are shaping the future of language. One in particular is relevant to this conversation about images and writing. According to Baines, "The age of the image is upon us" (46). Comparing the eloquent speeches of early American politicians with the "slick, simplistic sound bites" of today, Baines detects a linguistic trend of using images to replace words. He substantiates the trend further by looking at advertisements, "which increasingly emphasize sound and image to the exclusion of language" (44). A second trend indicates that the written word is losing its authority. Though the popularity of emails and texts might lead one to believe that people write frequently and abundantly, Baines suggests the spontaneous nature of the content and the limitations of the medium—such as 140-character tweets—position these writings closer to oral rather than written communications. Baines also notes a trend in the way we consume words, moving from printed books and magazines to laptop screens and televisions.

This shift from words to image is not without consequences; such changes could herald the loss of polysyllabic words, which, in turn, could hamper our ability to write eloquently and precisely. As ineffective writers reach wider audiences through blogs and

social networking, our culture could lose its ability to distinguish good writing. Ultimately, the human capacity for thinking could shrink as the world "recedes from the written word and becomes inundated with multisensory stimuli" (46). In the face of these desperate scenarios, however, Baines acknowledges that the shift is not without benefits; compared to words, images "foster faster comprehension, enable easier communications, support stronger retention, and stimulate new ways of thinking" (46).

In "Our Visual Persuasion Gap," authors Martin Gurri, Craig Denny, and Aaron Harms cite similar evidence to support what they call, "the triumph of the image over the printed word" (101). Even though our culture increasingly relies on images to inform and entertain, we continue to use traditional definitions of literacy based only on language and words; the potential for visual literacy has been ignored. According to visual communication scholar Ann Marie Barry, visual elements can evoke emotional reactions before our brains consciously begin to process the information; this emotional processing leaves us "highly susceptible to emotional manipulation on an unconscious level" (66). Gurri, Denny, and Harms agree that humans respond more "viscerally" to images than to text. They further contend, "the persuasive power of the image works in part because we are largely unaware of it" (106). The good news, however, is that the problem is solvable. "Visual literacy can be taught, learned, and applied just as textual literacy has been" (104).

Suzanne Choo from Teachers College Columbia University agrees. Writing in *The High School Journal*, Choo maintains that what we think of as *text* has expanded beyond the printed word to include other forms such as visual and new media. With so much information being distributed using non-print modes, multimodal literacy,

including visual literacy, has become "part of the discourse of the 21st century" (168). Choo acknowledges that writing instruction continues to be dominated by the verbal, even as attention on multimodal texts increases (170). She urges writing teachers to shift instruction from mono-modal to multimodal, stating the aim of such a shift is to "provide creative spaces in the writing classroom that would empower students to become writers as well as composers of text" (174).

Daley also challenges our assumptions about reading and writing. In "Expanding the Concept of Literacy," she confirms that literacy skills are traditionally conceived as text-based, mediated only by the printing of words on paper (33). She too argues for an expanded definition of literacy—one that recognizes multiple rhetorical elements in additional to verbal texts—and predicts that "those who are truly literate in the twenty-first century will be those who learn to read and write the multimedia language of the screen" (34). While some colleges and universities teach courses in visual literacy, Daley considers such courses problematic because they address only the reading side of the literacy equation and ignore writing as inherent to the literacy concept. Moreover, by focusing on the interpretation and not also the production of images, such courses position visual literacy as nothing more than a defense mechanism against a media intent on lies and manipulation (37).

Kathleen Blake Yancey made a similar argument for expanding our concept of literacy in 2004, when she delivered the Chair's Address to the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). Her address, "Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key" has since become a sort of rallying cry for changes in college composition. She begins by defining the moment: "Never before has the

proliferation of writings outside the academy so counterpointed the compositions inside. Never before have the technologies of writing contributed so quickly to the creation of new genres" (298). Yancey goes on to compare the "writing public" of today with the "reading public" of the nineteenth century—each codependent on the emerging technology of the day. She questions more than once what we mean when we refer to writing (298, 304), and how new writing spaces and production technologies are re-shaping our definitions of composition (306).

Yancey sees 2004 as the right moment for CCCC professionals to make three significant changes. She advocates for a new curriculum, a revision of writing-across-the-curriculum efforts, and an academic major in composition and rhetoric (308). Yancey's vision of composition "includes the literacy of print: it adds on to it and brings the notions of practice and activity and circulation and media and screen and networking to our conceptions of process (320).

Choo, Daley, Yancey, and others argue for expanded concepts of literacy and, subsequently, of composition. All endorse changes to higher education curricula—changes that respect multiple forms of communication and prepare students to compose using a diverse set of tools in a variety of spaces, including the hyper-mediated screens of blogs, chat rooms, and social networking sites. Many arguments echo Diana George's widely referenced article "From Analysis to Design: Visual Communication in the Teaching of Writing." Published a decade ago, George's article has anchored numerous calls for changes in writing instruction. Even in 2002, George sensed that the debate about the importance of visual literacy had been won; she considered talk of multiple

literacies, visual communication, and writing as its own form of visual communication to be commonplace (13).

However, George acknowledged that the terminology used to discuss visual literacy and visual rhetoric was problematic. Friction also existed around whether visual literacy instruction belonged in English and composition or in some other department (13). She contended that visuals have served as little more than accessories in writing classes, often added by the teacher in hopes of building interest or relevancy. Like Daley, George faulted many programs for offering biased instruction that positions students as consumers and critics of visual texts, rarely as producers (13). George's goal—which many have since assumed—was to move beyond "vague calls" to include visuals in composition (15) by questioning what might happen if we "very consciously" brought them into the classroom "as a form of communication worth both examining and producing" (14).

While Daley situated this visually inclusive curriculum in a media studies program, George convincingly places it within the scope of first-year writing programs. She cites a fifty-year history of increasing attention to visuals in composition textbooks—a history that in itself substantiates the overriding "suspicion that the visual must somehow be important to writing." From her personal experience, George offers examples of students creating "sophisticated and relevant" arguments communicated primarily through visuals. This seems to support her often-quoted assessment that, "Our students have a much richer imagination for what we might accomplish with the visual than our journals have yet to address" (12).

As scholars and teachers expand definitions of literacy and communication to include the visual, they change what it means to compose. Composition, then, becomes a process that employs not just words, but a variety of images and sounds. In the spirit of what Yancey might call a "new key," I argue for increased attention to visuals in first-year writing programs—attention that includes the study of rhetorical images and designs. Writing instruction that employs multiple elements serves our students better than our current text-only instruction. And, by inviting students to write inside the academy in ways that are already familiar to them and that will prepare them for the business writing to come, we increase the likelihood that students will see first-year composition as relevant to the rest of their lives.

In 2009, Andrea Lunsford, Director of Stanford's Program in Writing and Rhetoric, completed a five-year study of the writing practices of almost 2000 Stanford University students. Lunsford's team observed that college students today write more than any previous generation and that the writing students do outside the academy—which accounts for about one third of their total production—has little in common with the writing they do inside. Not surprisingly, the study confirmed that students were more interested in and committed to the writing they did outside of class than the writing they did for school (Haven). Their outside writing is voluntary, purposeful, and often multimodal, as students create personal texts with a variety of visual and aural elements. Their in-school writing, however, is likely to be formulaic and void of character, having been written only for evaluation purposes. It is easy to see how students might consider in-school assignments irrelevant. Since students cared more about what the study calls "life writing" than the writing they did for school, Lunsford encourages writing

instructors to erase the line that divides these two writing practices (Lunsford). In a *Stanford News* article, Lunsford concludes that college writers need to "retain the best of print literacy, and know how to deploy it for their own purposes. They also need and deserve to be exposed to new forms of expression" (Haven).

As writing instructors, we can help students merge—or at least blur the edges of—their separate writing environments. We have enough theoretical evidence to support a more diverse classroom, in the kinds of writing we teach, as well as in the kinds of documents we ask students to produce. Why not acknowledge students' current writing practices and products—those which composition has historically pushed to the margins—and invite them into the classroom?

James Elkins is another scholar who challenges higher education, specifically composition studies, to make room for visual rhetoric. In his introduction to *Visual Literacy*, Elkins observes that our culture is routinely described as visual and that much of our information is represented visually. In light of this cultural shift toward the visual, Elkins asks whether general education classes can continue to be defined by text-only literacy. "It is time," he advises, "to consider the possibility that literacy can be achieved through images as well as text and numbers" (4).

Sensing the same disparity between the visually mediated world we live in and the text-based composition we teach, Charles Hill laments how the educational system has neglected the visual and describes as "relatively miniscule" the time and effort devoted to visual rhetoric in the classroom. In "Reading the Visual in College Writing Classes," Hill accuses the fields of rhetoric, in general, and composition, in particular, for largely ignoring visual types of expression. Like Gurri, Denny, and Harms, Hill warns

that this ignorance leaves Americans—including our first-year composition students—inadequately prepared to interpret the "highly manipulated images" they receive (108). Calling on educators to develop a pedagogy that addresses visual rhetoric, Hill acknowledges that many writing instructors have started to include visuals. He points to the (then, recently) published textbook, *Seeing & Writing*, by Donald and Christine McQuade, as evidence that instructors and publishers are starting to take visual rhetoric more seriously. However, he also acknowledges possible deterrents to an improved pedagogy, such as a lack of consensus concerning the proper use of visuals in composition and, as George also cited, a lack of accepted terminology.

Experts from within composition and rhetoric generally agree on the need for an updated curriculum that provides general education programs with greater exposure to rhetorical theory and principles. Communication-related disciplines, including composition, have embraced—at least in theory—the inevitable recognition of visual images as a means of communication and of composing. We have to adjust our concepts of literacy to include visual, aural, and interactive modes, in addition to verbal. Even though scholars continue to accept theories of multimodal composition, those theories are not being implemented in the classroom. In the second half of this section, I try to find the official positions on visual literacy in composition within some local writing programs and the professional organizations that guide them.

Clarifying Objectives

As writing instructors, we must provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills to meet standards of student performance set from within the academy. Yet we must know also the performance expectations of the corporate sector and consider the

writing challenges that students face after they leave academia; what skills will students need to compete in the marketplace? In contrast to the skills presented in many composition programs—which are heavily, if not solely, focused on one tool (words) in only one format (academic essay)—twenty-first century professionals will need skills that enable them to communicate using multiple elements in the production of a wide spectrum of documents. I turned to academic and professional writing organizations to discover the subtle ways in which they are—or are not—influencing writing curricula and visual literacy practices in the classroom.

Since its founding in 1915, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has supported the goal of providing for all students an education that empowers them with "broad knowledge and transferable skills" ("Liberal Education"). In 2005, the AAC&U launched the Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative, which established a set of "Essential Learning Outcomes" designed to ensure that all college students receive a twenty-first century liberal education. Written and oral communications are among the essential "intellectual and practical skills" that, according to the initiative, should be "practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects and standards for performance" ("Essential Learning Outcomes"). LEAP established rubrics for each outcome in order to facilitate institutional-level discussion in the desired skill area. The rubric for written communication begins by defining the term as "the development and expression of ideas in writing." Written communication can "involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images" ("Written Communication").

By defining writing in this way, LEAP and the larger body of AAC&U demonstrate that they value the communicative power of images and, therefore, expect students to be able to communicate using text and non-text modes. LEAP noted that its development of writing assessments was guided by the work of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA).

Since both of these professional associations heavily influence the design and delivery of high school and university writing programs, I canvassed them for standards, guidelines, or position statements that mention visual literacy and student preparedness in written communications. In describing the desired competencies of first-year writing students, the WPA states that students who have completed first-year composition should be able to "respond appropriately to different kinds of rhetorical situations," and "write in several genres" ("WPA Outcomes"). Such ambiguous phrasing is ineffective; without defining or giving examples of "different kinds of rhetorical situations" or "several genres," the competency allows for narrow, traditional interpretations as well as broader, more contemporary ones. The WPA also addresses composing in electronic environments, yet the outcomes refer only to the use of technology in the research, writing, and distribution of texts; they fail to consider visual, non-text based modes of information processing or production.

Judging by the discussion that led to its "Resolution on Composing with Nonprint Media," NCTE takes a bolder position on visuals in composition. The 2003 resolution acknowledges that students live in a world that is "increasingly non-printcentric" and use visual art, graphics, and sound to compose outside the classroom. Suggesting that educators treat new media texts no differently from any other forms of composition,

NCTE encourages staff development that focuses on "new literacies, multimedia composition, and a broadened concept of literacy." They also push for the development of policy models that "promote multimedia composition" ("Resolution"). The organization further supports visual communication in its 2005 "Position Statement on Multimodal Literacies." Speaking to English teachers from kindergarten through college, including first-year writing instructors, NCTE urges educators to embrace multimodal literacies. "It is the interplay of meaning-making systems (alphabetic, oral, visual, etc.) that teachers and students should strive to study and produce" ("Position Statement").

In addition to heeding recommendations from the WPA and NCTE, a first-year writing instructor tries try to build a curriculum that aligns with the writing program at his or her university. I surveyed a few first-year programs, looking for indications of how programs have embraced—or mean to embrace—an expanded concept of composition. Though not always articulated in their official descriptions, writing programs feature varying degrees of commitment to integrate multimodal composing. This commitment seems to be somewhat related to the focus of the writing program: does it aim to prepare students for the production of writing within the academy or for their later writing—often to academic standards—in the workplace? Inclinations toward visual rhetoric, visual literacies, or multimodal composing may not be obviously stated, but that does not necessarily mean that the program does not value or practice those skills. Similarly, the absence of terms such as future, business, or professional in a brief program description does not prove that the program is negligent in preparing students for future writing. The point I want to make, is that a writing program cannot propose to prepare students for

life-long writing without first acknowledging how images are changing the process and production of composition.

With these ideas in mind, I began with the writing program at Kennesaw State University (KSU)—the one with which I am most familiar. When I taught freshman composition, I included an introduction to the study of visual rhetoric; many of my colleagues covered similar material and assigned projects that included visuals. However, the motivation to attend to visual images in composition seems to be voluntary, not driven by KSU's first-year program guidelines. On the contrary, guidelines firmly establish that "Composition I is a writing course" in which students will learn to "express their ideas and thoughts in written English," writing the equivalent of four or five essays, about 7000 to 11,000 words ("Guidelines"). Such production measurements signal that the written essay is the dominant mode of composition at KSU. Guidelines advise that teaching basic document design may "enhance student writing" ("Guidelines"). Such phrasing suggests that any attention to the visual is discretionary, more afterthought than critical element, just as Daley described (37). KSU's guidelines do not specify intent to prepare students for only academic or professional writing. On one hand, writing skills are highly transferable and students will be able to apply them in their academic coursework as well as in their future professions. On the other hand, given that business writing—like all public writing—is becoming more image-centric, KSU seems to neglect the multimodal literacy skills that millennial students need.

Stanford University and the University of Kentucky publish descriptions and guidelines that more clearly affirm their positions on visual rhetoric and, by extension, student preparedness. Consider this excerpt from Stanford's "Goals of first-year writing":

> . . . we aim to guide Stanford's first-year students in writing academic arguments and research-based essays, using rhetorical principles that will enable them to enter courses in many fields, analyze the discourses they find there, and, on the basis of their analyses, begin to participate effectively in those discourses, whether oral or written ("Goals").

Stanford's Program of Writing and Rhetoric (PWR) does not indicate a concern for the writing students will do outside the academy, only for their academic writing. Elsewhere, however, I found that before graduating, all students are required to complete a third writing course, Writing in the Major, through an academic department (versus Writing and Rhetoric).

Stanford describes a conservative, academically focused first-year program that differs greatly from the writing program at the University of Kentucky:

> UK has taken the lead in designing foundational courses that recognize the importance of multi-modal communication in today's public spheres. Successful communicators must be equally skilled in visual analysis and design, spoken communication, textual designs, and digital literacies. WRD 110 and WRD 111 put a special emphasis on these skills ("What is C&C").

The mention of "public spheres" signals Kentucky's intent to prepare students for all types of writing, during and after college. In fact, the UK Writing Center declares itself able and willing to help students to compose "in all media, including essays, reports, posters, visuals, websites, slide presentations, and videos" ("Mission"). Whereas Stanford's statement is silent about the role of visuals in first-year composition, and KSU

guidelines only allude to such study, it seems Kentucky, through terms such as "multimodal communication" and "digital literacies" is among the leaders in contemporary composition.

Anticipating Resistance

After being questioned about the need for teaching students "the language of sound and image," Elizabeth Daley remembers returning home, eager to discuss with her English department colleagues possible ways to bring multimedia writing into freshman composition. Daley reports being greeted with "profound silence" (40). Instead, she shared her ideas with a willing audience in the School of Cinema and together they built what is now the USC Institute for Multimedia Literacy.

Regardless of official mission statements and program guidelines, instructors of first-year writing at most universities are free to develop their own curricula. Even as they espouse a theoretical position that calls for visual modes of production, many writing instructors resist making changes to their practices that reflect that position. In "Thinking about Multimodality," Pamela Takayoshi and Cynthia Selfe confirm that while composition theory has "evolved" to include multimodal texts, many teachers still rely on assignments using a single mode: printed text (1). Sean Williams wrote over ten years ago that scholarship had already turned to the integration of multimedia texts, yet, most instructors were asking students to compose verbal texts "because 'that's what we do in composition.' We teach students how to write" (25).

In October of last year, I used the WPA-L Listserv to ask WPA members for a brief description of how first-year writing teachers were using visuals in their classes. A few members referred me to published works on visual literacy and visual rhetoric; others

shared their ideas and activities, some of which I use in the following chapter. Overall, however, I received a very limited number of responses—less than a dozen. Several factors could account for such scarcity; for instance, WPA and, hence, the Listserv, represent senior professionals who may no longer teach first-year classes. Members may lack the time and interest to respond to yet another curious graduate student. Regardless of any extenuating circumstances, I submit that my dismal response rate might also suggest a gap between what composition scholars say they should be doing—teaching students to use a full range of rhetorical skills—and what we actually are doing in the writing classroom—teaching only some of them.

This gap between theory and practice is complicated; instructors offer plenty of reasons why they resist changing their classroom activities. I cannot, in the scope of this paper, investigate or resolve even some of these issues. However, I hope by exposing them—like the proverbial monster under the bed—I can begin to neutralize their influence.

For instance, some instructors agree with visual literacy theories, and yet believe, as Daley's English colleagues did, that visuals are the domain of other university departments. Bruce McComiskey of the University of Alabama at Birmingham believes, as did Diana George, that composition is the appropriate home of visual literacy. In his article, "Visual Rhetoric and the New Public Discourse," he offers a challenging response to colleagues who imply that their ability to teach visual communication is restricted by their roles as *writing* teachers: "I don't teach *writing*. I teach *rhetoric*." McComiskey goes on to explain the difference between writing, which may be limited by definition to verbal representation, and rhetoric, which is "multi-representational, and may be

practiced in any medium, *including* writing" (188). I wholly agree with McComiskey's writing/rhetoric differentiation and submit that it is time to divorce ourselves from program names that limit what we do or how we think of ourselves as composition teachers and instead create names, such as Rhetorical Studies, that leave room for contemporary interpretations of literacy.

Debate over the possibility of visual argument also causes resistance, since rhetorical argument is a critical component in many FYC programs and composition textbooks. Instructors position the appeals of ethos, logos, and pathos as rhetorical building blocks for the construction of effective arguments. Some educators believe that those rhetorical appeals are necessarily linguistic, which leads them to question whether pictures and other images can sustain an argument. If they cannot, then what is their purpose in the composition classroom?

David Birdsell and Leo Groarke, convinced that "argumentation theorists do not pay enough attention to the visual components of argument and persuasion," hosted a collection of articles in consecutive issues of *Argumentation and Advocacy*. They contend, that students—such as those in our first-year writing classes—who learn argumentation only in terms of verbal elements are not prepared to assess visual modes of reasoning and persuasion (1). Through this collection of essays, Birdsell and Groarke hope to "spur the development of a more adequate theory of argument which makes room for the visual" (1).

In part one of the collection, David Fleming concedes that a visual image can influence but questions whether it can argue, in the conventional sense. He defines argument as "a human act conducted in two parts (claim and support) and with awareness

of two sides (the claim allows for and even invites opposition)" and contends that those roles—claim, support, opposition—cannot be accomplished using images alone. Therefore, while visuals can support arguments, there can be no visual argument (19). Birdsell and Groarke note that Fleming's essay provides an appropriate opening for a discussion of visual argument.

In his essay, J. Anthony Blair affirms the very existence of visual argument by discussing their various qualities and comparing them to their verbal counterparts. Both are propositional entities expressed in different ways. Like verbal arguments, visual arguments can be "one-sided" and "unidimensional," and since most images fall short of expressing reasons and claims, as Fleming suggested, Blair concludes that many visuals do not constitute argument (38). Nowhere, however, does Blair suggest that they cannot.

In part two of the collection, Cameron Shelly opens her essay with a quote by Roy Fox, "Visual argumentation is pervasive in modern life" (53). Presuming the existence of visual argument, Shelly demonstrates how various examples work. She distinguishes between what she calls "rhetorical and demonstrative" modes of visual argument, noting that visuals may take advantage of one or both (67). She further describes visual arguments as "useful for their ease of comprehension and their emotional impact on the viewer (53).

While the preceding arguments evidently keep some instructors from updating their classrooms to reflect how visuals are changing composition, the majority of resistance stems from the many logistical issues involved with incorporating visuals—how to introduce visual design, what readings to assign, what visuals are appropriate, how to design visual assignments, and how to grade those assignments. In the following

chapter, I offer practical strategies from experienced writing instructors who have already incorporated visuals into their first-year programs. I anticipate that these teaching strategies will encourage and inform other writing instructors as they develop their own responses to the call for visuals in composition study and production. Any such movement will help narrow the gap between composition theory as it relates to visual images and classroom practice.

Chapter Three: Pedagogy

At this point, the need for visual rhetoric in composition is obvious. In "Students Who Teach Us," Cynthia Selfe writes simply that composition teachers must be willing "to expand their own understanding of composing beyond conventional bounds of the alphabetic," and to move quickly "or risk having composition studies become increasingly irrelevant" (54). The discipline seems to have reached theoretical consensus around the need for visual and multimodal composing. Author and editor Carolyn Handa acknowledges that composition has begun taking visuals more seriously (2). However, Handa would also agree with Hill and others that we have yet to develop a "disciplinary framework" for the appropriate study of visual rhetoric (Hill 111).

This chapter provides theoretical and empirical information that can help writing instructors develop their own strategies for integrating visual rhetoric. After attending a teaching workshop about millennials, I wondered if this group—that makes up the majority in most of our general education and first-year composition classes—presented any particular challenges to college instructors. As educators, if we are willing to consider expanding our composition pedagogy based on what we learn about content, we should also be willing to consider changes based on what we learn about our students. Are there difference between millennial students and students in other generations that might warrant such changes?

Considering Millennials

Historians and authors Neil Howe and William Strauss have spent years studying generational differences in America; they claim that members of each generation—from the Silent Generation to the Baby Boomers to Generation X—exhibit traits and behaviors that distinguish them from generations that come before or after their own. Howe and Strauss define members of the millennial generation, or millennials, as having been born between 1982 and 1998; some authorities define the group using slightly different dates and label it using different names, such as Echo Boomers, Generation Y, the Net Generation, and Digital Natives. The estimated size of the millennial generation in the United States is 76,000. The oldest millennials are approaching thirty and, presumably, have entered the workforce; the youngest are ten. The center of the millennial pack arrived in 1992 and entered college in 2011, meaning that most participants in FYC programs today are considered millennial students.

Chapter Two explored some of the academic and professional expectations for these students. Here, I want to discuss the unique values, attitudes, and behaviors these students bring to college and, in particular, to composition class. For example, some experts suggest that because millennials have grown up in environments saturated with images, they exhibit a higher degree of visual literacy. Author Marc Prensky has studied the millennial generation for years; he coined the term "digital native" to reflect the fact that this generation has grown up with cellphones, video games, and the Internet. Prensky contends that millennial students, having been exposed to so many images and image production technology, have developed enhanced abilities to read and interpret images (5). In "Educating the Net Generation," Editors Oblinger and Oblinger agree that

millennial students have an "inherent ability" to interpret images and use the term "intuitive" to describe their visual communication skills (2.5).

I have two millennial children. I understand that technology comes easily to them; they instinctively know how to get what they want from high-tech tools and software. They are adept at mining the Internet for articles, pictures, sound bites, and videos and then combining them in new ways. However, I am not convinced that knowing *how* to find and manipulate those elements has developed in them an "inherent ability" to engage critical reading and analysis. Communication consultant and professor, Eva Brumberger, writing in the *Journal of Visual Literacy*, refutes Prensky's digital native argument (20). Having the technical ability to communicate, whether in words or images, is not equal to understanding how to make meaning. Like Gurri, Denny, and Harms (104), Brumberger contends, "If we accept that visual literacy is an essential ability for the 21st century, we must teach our students to be visually literate, just as we teach them to be verbally literate" (46).

Examples from my own teaching experience support Brumberger's position and contradict the idea that millennials have some sort of intuitive ability for visual analysis. To begin my visual analysis assignment, I asked students to find images that they thought contained an argument and to show me their images before beginning their analyses. One student selected an online image that looked to be an iPod advertisement. The image featured several familiar elements from the typical, almost iconic, ads for Apple products: a bold, colorful background, a white silhouette of the product, a dark silhouette of the person using it, and the white apple logo.

Like my student, I thought I knew this image; I approved the ad as the subject for his visual analysis. I did not ask him where he found the image, although he knew that the picture's provenance would be required in his essay. His final analysis, however, revealed that my student had not bothered to trace the origins of his image; his teacher had. I discovered that the image was not an advertisement for Apple, but instead, was one of hundreds of spoofs that use the same familiar elements. I had a difficult time explaining to my student how the picture's provenance, or lack thereof, essentially voided his analysis. (Of course, he could have written an analysis of the same subject, acknowledging the fact that it was a parody and, thus, represented a completely different argument.)

In a similar instance, a student wanted to write about what looked to be a picture of a political pin. It was a great image, and the student had much to say about what he thought it symbolized. Since I was unfamiliar with the image, I pressed the student for details about its origin: what party did it represent? When was it created? What were the political issues of the time? Since neither of us could determine the true source of the image—it was simply a random Google image, with no identifying context—I did not approve it. Like the student in my earlier example, this student had a difficult time understanding why the context of an image was important to its sound analysis.

I did not accept the claim that millennials have an intuitive ability to understand visuals; however, I searched additional resources for information about this generation that might help teachers work with them. In *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation,* Howe and Strauss identified seven key traits of today's traditional college students—traits that may help explain their classroom expectations and performance. Of

course, not all students conform to the tidy generalizations that supposedly characterize their age group; furthermore, some experts reject any and all sweeping characterizations. Michael Wilson and Leslie E. Gerber, for instance, believe that the usefulness of Howe and Strauss's work is limited because they did not adequately consider how race, ethnicity, and class might have skewed their results (30). Nevertheless, Wilson and Gerber use Howe and Strauss's observations as a tool for understanding and, ultimately, working better with students.

Howe and Strauss characterize the millennial generation using seven behavioral traits; they report that millennials behave in ways that indicate they feel special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, achieving, pressured, and conventional (43). Wilson and Gerber then established four recommendations or "adaptions" that loosely correspond with those traits (30). Experienced teachers will recognize these adaptions as simply good teaching practice; however, each recommendation is uniquely applicable to the content and/or audience of the FYC classroom.

Adaptation One: make course syllabi, assignments, and evaluation instruments especially clear (32). Of course, teachers should always try to write instructions as clearly as possible, but it is interesting to see how millennials maintain their "sheltered" experience by having and following exact directions. Some students in my first-year classes expressed frustration over the openness of my visual argument assignment. I thought they would enjoy a little creative license; however, they were not comfortable accepting responsibility for what the finished product should look like. They wanted me to tell them what to do and how to do it. Their anxiety caused students to focus on

production values such as page counts instead of the rhetorical goals of the project. Now I understand why those clear guidelines are so important to them.

Adaptation Two: offer significant possibilities for student initiative and creativity (33). This recommendation seems to contradict the first one, however, because millennials have grown up choosing from a wide array of options for everything from breakfast cereals to cellphones, it is not surprising that they expect to have choices in their assignments. In their own classes, Wilson and Gerber provide more than one way for students to meet requirements. Team presentations might be substituted for individual ones or an essay requirement might be fulfilled through a series of online postings. When they are able to exercise choices, students gain a sense of control over their work.

During my last teaching assignment, I tried to provide just such options for at least one assignment. Students were required to submit four responses about our readings over the course of the semester; I described what I meant by *responding* and outlined questions that might prompt a reaction. However, I gave students a choice of responding in a narrative or in some other genre, such as a poem, song, video, or slide show. My only requirement was that each response had to reflect the student's engagement with and careful consideration of the text. After encouraging reminders of how little each of these individual grades mattered, all twenty-six students chose to write a narrative for all four responses; they were willing to sacrifice the potential for something more creative in exchange for the familiar format of the essay.

Like writing clear objectives, offering students creative options is not new; teachers have always sought ways to help students feel in control of their own work. However, multimodal composing is uniquely suited for this recommendation, because

students have many opportunities to make rhetorical choices. Though my students did not take advantage of their opportunities, I see now that I can instill more confidence by providing additional guidelines and assessments.

Adaptation Three: implement pre-planned measures to help students reduce stress (34). Howe and Strauss report that this generation is motivated by a constant pressure to excel (184); however, overwhelming stress eventually affects performance and attitude. Wilson and Gerber suggest that delivering material in smaller segments helps alleviate some of that stress (35). I confess that I frequently complain about students who cannot seem to complete homework and reading assignments. Even before I learned what stress my students might be under, it made sense for me to find ways to lighten the reading load and choose more in-depth coverage of fewer topics. One way I could help students cope was to present smaller, more manageable content units. Again, composition classes are well suited for this adaptation; information about argument, rhetorical appeals, document design, the writing process, and citation guidelines can all be organized into discrete units of study.

Adaptation Four: give rigorous attention to the ethics of learning (37). Millennials can move quickly between feelings of confidence and ambition to feelings of competitiveness and self-absorption. Educators must be aware of these dichotomies and how they can influence class dynamics. Wilson and Gerber remind us that millennial students need help to understand the rigor of college-level classes. In spite of their own prevailing sense of entitlement, students need to understand that grades reflect levels of performance, not perceived effort, and that cheating will never be tolerated. These issues are particularly problematic for the writing classroom. Students who are used to receiving

grades from one-time performances are loath to revisit their texts and when they do, they automatically expect a higher grade. The accessibility of online information and the ease of the cut and paste function make it all too easy for students to plagiarize a few words or an entire essay. All four guidelines—setting clear goals, breaking work into manageable pieces, helping students manage stress, and discussing the ethics of learning—work together to help millennial students manage college-level classes, such as composition.

Learning from Experience

The generational research of Howe and Strauss, coupled with the educational recommendations of Wilson and Gerber have provided some basic teaching strategies that are appropriate for all instructors of millennial students. But, what instructional strategies are appropriate for teaching millennial students to compose using multiple modes of representation? As our theories about visual rhetoric and composition coalesce, our lack of a working framework becomes more apparent. However, it has not stopped composition teachers—Ph.D.s to graduate students—from introducing visual rhetoric. Their early implementations provide the rest of us with a road map from which we will develop more consistent curricula and teaching models.

The most important truth about developing a curriculum that includes visual rhetoric is that there is no single best approach. Methods of instruction are influenced by class size, accessible technology, skill levels of both teachers and students, and curriculum objectives. Despite all these variables, instructors with little experience incorporating visual or multimodal assignments report being pleasantly surprised with the results.

In "Multiple Modes of Production in a College Writing Class," three first-year writing teachers share their early experiences with multimodal composing. Recognizing

Yancey's 2004 moment, the authors were ready to open their classrooms to different forms of composing (Frost, Myatt, and Smith 182). During her first multimodal assignment, Dr. Alanna Frost, now first-year writing instructor and Director of Composition at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, noted how the logistics of implementing new assignments with visual components were no different from those of previous writing assignments. She further observed that she did not have to change anything in her pedagogy to fit visual rhetoric—the terms, the research, the composing and review processes were already in place. She was able to guide students through the completion of the assignment with "standard explanations of how to compose" (Frost, Myatt, and Smith 184).

Borrowing tools from her writing assessments, Frost made a rubric that she reviewed in advance with the students, so that all parties knew what to expect. As previously noted by Wilson and Gerber, such practice can ease students' anxieties over a new assignment (34). The visual rubric also provided a way to steer students away from the technical aspects and more toward the rhetorical considerations of their projects. In the end, the class debated the merits of composing with and without visuals (Frost, Myatt, and Smith 184).

Laricia, one of Frost's students, validated the success of Frost's strategies. In a post-class evaluation she reported: "In this class you will get to create projects using multiple skills, talents and creativity to form coherent arguments, which will be a lot more fun then [sic] linear composition and allow you to obtain skills that, may be more applicable to how we communicate our ideas today through a variety of mediums" (Frost, Myatt, and Smith 185).

Frost and co-authors, Julie Myatt and Stephen Smith, report feeling anxiety when they first began working with multimodal compositions. They worried, like many instructors, about using technology that their students likely knew better than they did. They also assumed the assessment of multimodal projects would be very different from their usual assignments. The authors realized that the types of questions students were asking led to conversations about rhetorical choices that would not have come up under other circumstances; they also learned to depend on what they already knew about composing (191).

At the end of their article, Frost, Myatt, and Smith offer a few suggestions for writing instructors who are considering multimodal assignments. What follows is a very abbreviated version of their suggestions.

- Think about the goals of the class and encourage a gradual shift from writing to composing.
- Be okay with letting students try new technologies.
- High-tech is not necessarily better.
- Rely on your writing expertise.
- Provide assessment criteria early.
- Don’t let flashy technology substitute for content.
- Encourage creativity over production quality.
- Help students see their choices as rhetorical (192).

I have synthesized what I believe to be important considerations for any instructor willing to broaden his or her writing instruction though visual or multimodal composing. Ideas come from my own experience or, when noted, the work and experience of others.

The most important starting point for assigning multimodal projects is the same for all projects: to make explicit connections between the assignment and course objectives. Show students how the assignment meets the learning outcomes for the class.

Use visual texts to teach the concepts of rhetoric. The appeals—ethos, logos and pathos—as well as the rhetorical triangle and the canons can be represented by visual as well as verbal elements. Students can learn the concepts of author, audience, message, and context regardless of whether the rhetorical situation is manifest in words only, in images only, or in some combination. Anne Richards and Carol David suggest that students who recognize how visuals persuade may be better able to articulate the concept of written persuasion (5).

Before beginning a discussion on image analysis or asking students to compose a visual argument, have them read relevant texts about the concept of visual argument. In particular, two chapters from Carolyn Handa's *Visual Rhetoric in a Digital World* offer a useful starting place: "The Possibility and Actuality of Visual Arguments" by J. Anthony Blair and "Toward a Theory of Visual Argument" by Birdsell and Groarke. "Visual Argument," a chapter from *Everything's an Argument* by Lunsford, Ruszkiewicz and Walters, is another good introduction; it is less theoretical than the above articles and so may be more accessible to first-year students. It also moves rather quickly from the potential of visual arguments to their analysis and production.

Start with a visual analysis assignment. It may seem that at various times throughout this paper, I have argued against the use of visual analysis. The truth is that visual analysis can be a useful introduction to visual rhetoric. My concern is that instructors recognize that the skills required for image analysis and image production are

different and that both are required for visual literacy. Analyzing an image, with or without text, is a familiar first step for most students; analysis skills transfer easily from verbal to visual texts.

Give students examples of things to analyze that are not advertisements. Advertisements make popular subjects because their arguments are often readily identifiable; Graham, Hannigan, and Curran explain how advertisements "offer concrete examples of suspect and corrupt cultural values" (21). However, the authors also encourage instructors to examine a broader scope of visual texts; they suggest finding the potential in architecture and sculptures, book and album covers, and Web pages (23). Demonstrate to students that even printed text creates a rhetorical image; printed pages exhibit unique design features that are capable of conveying a message (Hill 141). Consider the ethos created by a conventionally formatted essay with one-inch borders and 12-point Times New Roman font on a plain white background.

Provide students with a basic introduction to visual elements and design principles. Students are more likely to engage in a rhetorical discussion if they know some design vocabulary and the rhetorical properties of color, symmetry, repetition, focal point, texture, and proportion, for instance. Such vocabulary also encourages students to consider each element as a rhetorically laden design rather than random ornamentation. I mentioned previously that I liked the introduction to design offered in the textbook *Writing Arguments* by John Ramage, John Bean, and June Johnson. Charles Hill recommends *The Non-Designer's Design Book* by Robin Williams, which I noticed received excellent reviews on Amazon.com.

Consider having students create original images or repurpose existing images. Using images only as writing prompts or subjects for analysis, we "limit the kinds of assignments we might imagine for composition" (George 11). George acknowledges that our millennial students, having grown up in an "aggressively visual culture" (15), have a "richer imagination for what we might accomplish with the visual than our journals have yet to address" (12). It is worth noting that current technology provides students (and teachers) ways to consume, capture, and manipulate images that were inconceivable only a decade ago.

Make a separate but related writing assignment to accompany a visual assignment. This step adds a sense of security and lets students stretch their rhetorical wings on the visual portion, yet fall back on a more familiar genre, such as an essay or reflection. Frost, Myatt, and Smith designed an essay to accompany their multimodal project; they felt this gave students confidence to "go out on a limb with multimodality" before returning to a safe, familiar task. They also noted that the sequence afforded them a chance to discuss the merits of both ways of composing (183).

Discuss subjects that would be addressed in preparation for a traditional assignment. Topics such as research, citations, and plagiarism are still applicable and necessary. In fact, the concept of authorship may assume a greater significance, given the availability of images on the Internet and the ease with which images can be removed from their original text and context. I am reminded of my student with the phony iPod ad.

Discuss with students how their work will be evaluated. A rubric or similar tool helps students (and instructors) focus on the rhetorical value of the product instead of the technical capabilities of the student. After letting her students design their own visual

argument evaluation, George observed that they adopted the same criteria that are common in evaluations of written arguments. Their criteria included whether the visual made an argument, how clear and interesting it was, and how relevant it was to the assignment (31).

Experimenting with Assignments

Each appendix (A-D) contains a visual rhetoric assignment appropriate for a first-year composition class. The assignments are varied, and each one is designed to be an independent activity that can be completed in one or two class periods, with some out of class time for research, writing, and related tasks. All the activities link to the general concepts of composing, rhetoric, and visuals. They also follow the recommendations for making good visual assignments offered earlier in this chapter. According to Hill, every general education course should be able to handle at least this much visual content (123).

In "Snapshot Redesign" (Appendix A), students complete a visual analysis of a USA TODAY Snapshot, an easy-to-read graphic of an interesting statistic. Students then re-create the information using a new type of graph or visual.

In "Design a Book Cover" (Appendix B), students watch an engaging video of graphic designer Chip Kidd, before creating a book cover for a favorite or assigned book. The example uses *Travel as a Political Act* by Rick Steves, but almost any book would be appropriate.

For the "Online Reputation Summary" (Appendix C) students complete an exhaustive online search for information about a classmate and then write an assessment that includes suggestions for the classmate to improve his or her online presence.

Finally, the "Photo Essay" (Appendix D) gives students a chance to work out an argument using only original photographs. Students may need help to recognize the similarity between the steps to complete a written essay—planning, research, and revision—and the steps for their photo essays.

These assignments are easy to implement and require little pre-work. Each assignment begins with an overview, which includes suggestions for a particular reading or video to introduce the topic and help students prepare. Some assumptions are made that first-year students have already been introduced to basic rhetorical concepts, the appeals, argument, and visual analysis. Little technical expertise is needed to complete the assignments; all methods of production can be accomplished using Microsoft Office software, although students are free to use whatever software is familiar to them. Manual production is often appropriate as well, as in the book cover assignment in Appendix B.

Evaluations for these assignments may have some variation—such as the quality of pictures in the photo essay—however, the rhetorical aspects of the project should always be the main consideration. Each assignment should demonstrate that the student has considered the message, the audience, and the medium for his or her situation. The project should reflect knowledgeable decisions about the selection and placement of words/photos/illustrations. The overall effectiveness of the project is most important.

The second emphasis for evaluation should be the quality of the finished product. This does not mean the technical sophistication of the project, but rather that the project, in whatever medium it was produced, looks like it was carefully planned and created. Of course, all text should be free from error.

Instructors may find it easier to evaluate an assignment using a rubric, based on the main categories of rhetorical consideration and the quality of various elements in the finished product. Regardless of what criteria are evaluated or whether a rubric or other tool is used, the most important consideration is to share the evaluation criteria with students early in the assignment. This reminds them to stay focused on getting their message across; it also help alleviate some of the anxiety that can accompany an unfamiliar assignment (Wilson and Gerber 32).

In their 2010 article for the National Education Association (NEA), authors Deandra Little and Peter Felten differentiate between our contemporary, image-based world and the predominately-verbal classrooms we create. They consider it the obligation of writing instructors to teach students about the power of images and argue for that teaching to be "deeply infused into the curriculum" (5). Little and Felten opened their discussion with a quote from art historian and critic James Elkins; it served as a concise abstract of their article. Here, it serves as an equally compelling conclusion of our discussion of visual assignments. "Images are central to our lives, and it is time they become central in our universities" (5).

Conclusion: Correcting Assumptions

In my first assignment as a teaching assistant, I shadowed a freshman composition class that was part of a learning community for art majors; several of our writing projects emphasized art. Of course, we studied visual analysis but we also visited an art exhibit and workshopped some of the writing students did for their art classes. I assumed, from this experience, that the amount of time this class devoted to visuals was a) common for a composition class, and b) positive. As it turns out, only one of those assumptions is true.

Once I started selecting rhetorics and readers for my own FYC classes, I realized that my first assumption was invalid. The majority of textbooks offered chapters on visual analysis, but little else. I noticed that new books were becoming more visually appealing, with bigger and brighter pictures and interesting page designs; in fact, the barrage of visuals sometimes made the content less rather than more accessible. What is important to note, however, is that these fresh contemporary texts paid little more attention to visuals than their older counterparts had. And, in my own composition studies classes, I remember only one assignment—the design of a visual analysis—that involved visual images. I do not remember discussing visuals at other times or for other reasons.

Consequently, I drafted a new theory about how visuals fit into composition. Because I could not see much evidence of visuals in textbooks or in my talks with other instructors, I drew some rather naïve conclusions about how composition, the discipline, recognized visual rhetoric. From what I could tell, first-year composition classes—

committed as they were, to the production of writers and writing—had little use for visuals. Students could write about art and advertisements, but otherwise, images seemed to have little purpose in the writing process or classroom.

What I have come to realize throughout the course of this study, however, is that the problem—which used to be the province of the discipline—has shifted to the classroom. The discipline of composition has changed in ways that are not yet reflected in our practices. It recognizes the evolution of a writing public and the ease with which every person can become an author and publisher. Composition, the discipline, recognizes the changes that technology brings in the way we communicate for business and entertainment—changes that are not only possible, but also inevitable. Composition scholars understand that twenty-first century students need to achieve literacy in multiple modes, including visual. The term "writing" is yielding to the term "composing," which includes the verbal, but also accommodates image and sound.

While the discipline has found a new key in composition, as Kathleen Yancey might describe it, the classroom does not seem to be keeping pace. Student performance is still measured in page counts and visual images are relegated to visual analysis. Students are learning to make rhetorical word choices, but rarely have to choose between words, images, or sound bites. In their personal writing spaces, however, students make those sorts of rhetorical choices every day—a disparity that the discipline has recognized, but that FYC programs do not seem to notice.

Many FYC classes are not teaching the communication skills that twenty-first century students need, even though the discipline has the necessary scholarship to do so. Composition's neglect of the visual has been resolved in theory, but not in practice,

which necessarily changes our line of inquiry. As we continue to explore the role of visuals in composition, we must ask not if visual rhetoric belongs, but how? How can writing instructors change their curriculums to accommodate visual composition? How will they assess multimodal projects? What technology do they need and how will they learn it?

Until we find answers to these questions, writing instructors will continue to resist bringing visual rhetoric in from the margins. Our next steps must include identifying and resolving as many barriers as possible—whether instructors perceive a lack of skills, time, or department-level support. As instructors, we need to work more quickly to share multimodal lesson plans, assignments, and assessments, things that help us build a multimodal framework for composing.

McComiskey gently reminds his colleagues that he is not a writing teacher but a teacher of rhetoric. Because he defines himself and his instruction in this manner, it was easy for him to respond to what he called "the ubiquitous presence of image communication." McComiskey believes that instead of teaching "representationally restrictive writing," we must move to teaching multi-representational rhetoric" (189). Communication in the twenty-first century is visual and higher education recognizes the need for a fuller range of communication studies. It will eventually come up with one or more solutions; will first-year composition be one of them?

This study has confirmed for me what those more experienced in the discipline already know: the instruction of visual rhetoric has a place in the curriculum of first-year composition classes. Now, writing program administrators and instructors have to figure out how to respond. What about the questions we have not yet asked? For instance, how

are technology and digital composition changing not just the production of writing but also the writing process? How does digital and multimodal composing change how we think about authorship; does a student sense ownership of his or her words if they appear nowhere but online? How does the explosion of online networking and publishing complicate the issues of authority and credibility? How does it affect the ethics of writing and the incidence of plagiarism? Is the English department the most appropriate place for visual rhetoric and multimodal composing? These are just a few of the questions that invite additional attention and research.

Let me be very clear in summarizing: I am in no way suggesting that higher education should replace current first-year writing classes with in-depth studies of rhetoric or graphic design; I am also far from insisting that every writing assignment have a visual component other than or in addition to writing. However, because first year writing programs serve the largest student populations, I consider it our obligation—as administrators, curriculum designers, and instructors—to create contemporary writing classes that value visual rhetoric and allow students to develop abilities in multiple literacies. In the end, we have to accommodate new literacies and new ways of composing. I do not resent our cultural shift toward the visual because I don't believe it is displacing words. I choose to see the situation as describe by artist and writer Ellen Lupton, "The alphabet isn't dead; it just has a lot more company" (Lupton).

Works Cited

"App Store Metrics." *148Apps*. TrouserMac Industries. 2012. Web. 5 Apr. 2012.

Baines, Lawrence. "A Future of Fewer Words? Five Trends Shaping the Future of Language." *The Futurist* 46.2 (2012): 42-46. Print.

Barbatsis, Gretchen S. "Look, and I Will Show You Something You Will Want to See": Pictorial Engagement in Negative Political Campaign Commercials." *Argumentation and Advocacy* 33.2 (1996): 69-80. *ProQuest Education Journals; ProQuest Research Library.* Web. 22 May 2012.

Barry, Ann Marie. *Visual Intelligence: Perception, Image, and Manipulation in Visual Communication*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997. *eBook Collection; EBSCOhost*. Web. 21 Apr. 2012.

"Basic Video Customers." *NCTA*. National Cable and Telecommunications Association. 2012. Web. 5 Apr. 2012.

Birdsell, David S., and Leo Groarke. "Toward a Theory of Visual Argument." *Argumentation and Advocacy* 33.1 (1996): 1-10. *ProQuest Education Journals; ProQuest Research Library.* Web. 5 Apr. 2012.

Blair, J. A. "The Possibility and Actuality of Visual Arguments." *Argumentation and Advocacy* 33.1 (1996): 23-39. *ProQuest Education Journals; ProQuest Research Library.* Web. 5 Apr. 2012.

Brumberger, Eva R. "Visual Literacy and the Digital Native: An Examination of the Millennial Learner." *Journal of Visual Literacy* 30.1 (2011): 19-46. Print.

Choo, Suzanne S. “Writing Through Visual Acts of Reading: Incorporating Visual Aesthetics in Integrated Writing and Reading Tasks.” *High School Journal* 93.4 (2010): 166-176. Academic Search Complete. Web. 15 May 2012.

Daley, Elizabeth. "Expanding the Concept of Literacy." *EDUCAUSE Review* 38.2 (2003): 32-40. ABI/INFORM Complete. Web. 15 Nov. 2011.

Dondis, Donis A. *A Primer of Visual Literacy*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1973. Print.

Elkins, James. “Introduction: The Concept of Visual Literacy, and Its Limitations.” *Visual Literacy*. Ed. James Elkins. New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008. 1-10. Print.

"Essential Learning Outcomes." Association of American Colleges and Universities. AAC&U, n.d. Web. 18 Sep. 2011.

Fleming, David. "Can Pictures be Arguments?" *Argumentation and Advocacy* 33.1 (1996): 11-22. *ProQuest Education Journals; ProQuest Research Library.* Web. 15 May 2012.

Forsyth, Patrick. "The Art Of Getting It Write." *Engineering & Technology* 3.20 (2008): 78-81. *Business Source Complete*. Web. 24 Nov. 2011.

Frost, Alanna, Julie A. Myatt, and Stephen Smith. “Multiple Modes of Production in a College Writing Class.” *Teaching the New Writing: Technology, Change, and Assessment in the 21st Century Classroom*. Eds. Anne Herrington, Kevin Hodgson, and Charles Moran. New York: Teachers College Press, 2009. 181-197. Print.

George, Diana. “From Analysis to Design: Visual Communication in the Teaching of Writing.” *College Composition and Communication* 54:1 (2002): 11-39. Print.

"Goals of first-year writing." *Stanford University*. Stanford University. n.d., Web 4 Apr. 2011.

Graham, Margaret, Katherine Hannigan, and Paula Curran. "Imagine: Visual Design in First-Year Composition." *Journal of Visual Literacy* 25.1 (2005): 21-41. Print.

"Guidelines for ENGL 1101: Composition I." *First-Year Composition*. Kennesaw State University. n.d. Web. 29 Nov. 2010.

Gurri, Martin, Craig Denny, and Aaron Harms. "Our Visual Persuasion Gap." *Parameters: U.S. Army War College* 40.1 (2010): 101-109. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 2 Jun. 2012.

Handa, Carolyn. "Placing the Visual in the Writing Classroom." *Visual Rhetoric in a Digital World: A Critical Sourcebook*. Ed. Carolyn Handa. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004. 1-5. Print.

Haven, Cynthia. "The New Literacy: Stanford study finds richness and complexity in students' writing." *Stanford University News*. Stanford University. 12 Oct. 2009. Web. 4 April 2011.

Hill, Charles A. "Reading the Visual in College Writing Classes." *Intertexts: Reading Pedagogy in College Writing Classrooms*. Ed. Marguerite Helmers. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003. Print.

Howe, Neil, and William Strauss. *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*. New York: Random House. 2000. Print.

Kress, Gunther, and Theo van Leeuwen. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.

"Liberal Education." *Association of American Colleges and Universities*. AAC&U, n.d. Web. 18 Sep. 2011.

Little, Deandra, and Peter Felten. "Seeing is Believing: Visual Teaching and Learning." *The Advocate* 27.3 (2010): 5-8. Web. 5 Nov. 2011.

Lunsford, Andrea. "Our Semi-literate Youth? Not So Fast." *Stanford Study of Writing*. Stanford University. 2008. Web. 4 April 2011.

Lupton, Ellen. "Writing 101: Visual or Verbal?" *Voice: AIGA Journal of Design* (13 Jan. 2009). Web. 11 Nov. 2010.

McComiskey, Bruce. "Visual Rhetoric and the New Public Discourse." *JAC* 24.1 (2004): 187-206. Print.

"Mission." *Writing, Rhetoric & Digital Media*. University of Kentucky. 3 Oct. 2011. Web. 11 Nov. 2011.

Mitchell, Justin. "How many photos are uploaded to Facebook each day?" *Quora*. n.p., 25 Jan. 2011. Web. 5 Mar. 2012.

Norman, Donald A. *Emotional Design: Why We Love (Or Hate) Everyday Things*. Basic Books, 2004. *eBook Collection; EBSCOhost*. Web. 4 Apr. 2012.

Oblinger, Diana G., and James L. Oblinger. "Is It Age or IT: First Steps Toward Understanding the Net Generation." *Educating the Net Generation*. Eds. Diana G. Oblinger and James L. Oblinger. Boulder: Educause, 2005. 2.1 – 2.20. Web. 5 Apr. 12.

"Our Mission." *P21*. Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011. Web. 3 Mar. 2012.

"Overview." *P21*. Partnership for 21st Century Skills, Dec. 2009. Web. 3 Mar. 2012.

"Position Statement on Multimodal Literacies." *National Council of Teachers of English*. NCTE, Nov. 2005. Web. 29 Nov. 2010.

Prensky, Mark. "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants Part 2: Do They Really Think Differently?" *On the Horizon* 9.6 (2001): 1–6. Web. 5 Nov. 2011.

"Resolution on Composing with Nonprint Media." *National Council of Teachers of English*. NCTE, 2003. Web. 29 Nov. 2010.

Richards, Anne R., and Carol David. "Fields of Vision: A Background Study of References for Teachers." *Writing the Visual: A Practical Guide for Teachers of Composition and Communication*. Eds. Carol David and Anne R. Richards. West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, 2008. 3-31. Print.

Selfe, Cynthia L. "Students Who Teach Us: A Case Study of A New Media Text Designer." *Writing New Media: Theory and Applications for Expanding the Teaching of Composition*. Eds. Anne Frances Wysocki, Johndan Johnson-Eilola, Cynthia L. Selfe, and Geoffrey Sirc. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2004. Print.

Shelley, Cameron. "Rhetorical and Demonstrative Modes of Visual Argument: Looking at Images of Human Evolution." *Argumentation and Advocacy* 33.2 (1996): 53-68. *ProQuest Education Journals; ProQuest Research Library.* Web. 10 Nov. 2011.

Takayoshi, Pamela, and Cynthia L. Selfe. "Thinking about Multimodality." *Multimodal Composition: Resources for Teachers*. Ed. Cynthia A. Selfe. New York: Hampton Press, 2007. 1-12. Print.

"What is C&C in WRD?" *Writing, Rhetoric & Digital Media*. University of Kentucky. 3 Oct. 2011. Web. 11 Nov. 2011.

Williams, Sean D. "Part 1: Thinking Out of the Pro-verbal Box" *Computers and Composition* 18.1 (2001): 21–32. Web. 3 Oct. 2011.

Wilson, Michael, and Leslie E. Gerber. "How Generational Theory Can Improve Teaching: Strategies for Working with the 'Millennials'" *Currents in Teaching and Learning* 1.1 (2008): 29-44. Web. 11 Nov. 2011.

"WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition." *Council of Writing Program Administrators*. WPA, 2005-2010. Web. 10 Nov. 2011.

"Written Communications." Association of American Colleges and Universities. AAC&U, n.d. Web. 18 Sep. 2011.

Yancey, Kathleen Blake. "Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key." *College Composition and Communication* 56.2 (2004): 297-325. Print.

Notes to Appendices

Each of the following appendices includes a section entitled “How Practice Meets Purpose.” Within these sections, the parenthetical citations refer to pages within this manuscript.

Appendix A

Snapshot Redesign

OVERVIEW:

USA TODAY publishes Snapshots on the first page of each newspaper section. To prepare students for this assignment, bring several newspapers to class so students can see examples. Alternatively, you can access present and archived Snapshots at USA TODAY.com.

Discuss several Snapshot examples, modeling a visual analysis. Was the information represented in the Snapshot easy to understand? What made the Snapshot design appropriate for the information and for the audience? How did the colors and graphics support (or possibly detract) from the information being presented? Did the visual mislead in any way?

In Part I of this two-part exercise, students will write a visual analysis of one Snapshot from USA TODAY. Choice of topics may be restricted by the instructor or left up to each student. Students should spend a little time investigating the source of information represented in the Snapshot in order to complete the visual analysis.

In Part II, students will re-create the Snapshot, based on the source of information cited in the original Snapshot. The new snapshot has to display the information in different form. For instance, if the original graphic included a bar graph, the new graphic must not be a bar graph. The new snapshot has to be accurate but may or may not represent the same statistics. For instance, the original Snapshot could show that 71

million households in the U.S. have pets. The student may choose, instead, to show the number of households that do not have pets, the number that have a particular kind of pet, or the number with multiple pets.

In Part III of the assignment, students will share their re-imagined snapshot using PowerPoint. Slide one will be the original Snapshot from USA TODAY. Slide two will be their re-imagined snapshot. Students should discuss how they redesigned the graphic. Did they choose different colors, a different display of information? Also, if they chose to highlight a different statistic, why did they choose that option? How do these changes affect how the reader interprets the information?

STUDENT TASK:

The purpose of this assignment is to encourage you to observe how elements such as graphics, typography, symbols, and color affect the way a reader interprets information and to practice using these visual elements to display information in new ways.

Part I: Write a one-page visual analysis on a USA TODAY Snapshot. Be sure to include your answers to the following: What is the origin of the information? Why did USA TODAY published this Snapshot? Is the information easy to understand? Is the design of the graphic effective? How did design elements contribute to the Snapshot's effectiveness and readability? What rhetorical appeals are at work?

Part II: After writing your analysis, re-create the information using a different design. Your design may depict the same statistic or a variation from the same source that highlights a different perspective. You cannot duplicate the graphics of the original Snapshot; you must use new graphics and text in your design. For instance, if the original Snapshot included a pie chart, you may not use a pie chart.

Part III: Create and deliver a PowerPoint presentation to the class. Slide one will show the original Snapshot as it appeared in USA TODAY. Using your visual analysis, explain a little about the image. Slide two will show your re-designed snapshot. Explain and justify the changes you made to the design; if you highlighted different information, state why. How will your re-design affect readers?

EVALUATION:

Part I: (45%) The visual analysis should be typed and submitted according to classroom guidelines. The analysis should include a detailed description of the original Snapshot. It should also state the original source of the information and evaluate how effectively the information is presented. What rhetorical appeals are used and how does each design element contribute to the readers' understanding of the information?

Part II: (45%) The newly designed snapshot should:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the statistical information.
- Be easy to read and understand.
- Use creative illustrations, graphs, and text that are appropriate for the topic.
- Use a pleasing arrangement of graphics, text, and colors that complement each other.
- Be neat and polished, with no grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors.
- Cite the original source of information.

Part III: (10%) PowerPoint slides should be neat, free from error, and easy to see. The student should be able to discuss both the original and re-created slides confidently.

HOW PRACTICE MEETS PURPOSE:

This assignment follows several of the suggestions summarized in Chapter Three of this project. The essay form and the process of visual analysis in Part I are already familiar to students. Starting with something familiar helps students feel confident in their ability to complete this portion of the assignment (61). Students can build on what they already know to complete the next part of the assignment.

The assignment creates a physical as well as mental shift of the responsibility of the student (60). First, students act as readers or interpreters of the visual, and then move to become authors of their own designs. They also gain practice applying basic design principles (62).

PowerPoint is a very accessible and easy tool to use; thus, students can focus on the rhetorical concepts of the assignment, instead of the technology needed to accomplish it (60).

Appendix B

Design a Book Cover

OVERVIEW:

To help prepare students for this assignment, watch the TED talk of Chip Kidd, graphic designer for Alfred A. Knopf. Entertaining and informative, Kidd shares how he made some of the rhetorical decisions that led to his cover designs. Visit www.ted.com and search for the name, Chip Kidd; the complete title is "Chip Kidd: Designing books is no laughing matter. OK, it is."

In addition, bring several books to class, preferably ones that are familiar to students. Point out the information that is included on the front, back, and spine of the book; other than the title and author, let students know any other pieces that are required in their own designs, such as publisher, date, or author bio. Together, do a visual analysis of a few sample book covers; ask students to discuss the visual details of each cover and what each detail tells them about the contents of the book, its author, or readers.

Decide what book students will use; you may have students choose their own book or you may choose a book from the course that everyone has read. Post activity discussions could compare different interpretations of the same book; however, you may wish for students to choose their own books according to some given criteria, i.e., first book they remember, favorite book, etc.

Production of the book cover can be a high-tech digital composition or a low-tech manual composition of any materials the students choose. Discuss with students how

each decision they make about the book is rhetorical and affects how the book will be received. Remind students that the quality of the finished product is important, however that does not mean it has to be produced using technical, expensive, or sophisticated methods or materials.

After producing their covers, students should reflect on the rhetorical choices they made during the production of their cover. This could be a class presentation or short essay. Since the purpose of a book design is to attract readers, you may wish to have the class vote on each design for fun or for a (small) part of the grade.

STUDENT TASK:

A book cover has to communicate information quickly and compel readers to make a selection. The purpose of this assignment is to practice using copy and design elements such as color, typography, graphics, and placement to design a book cover that will attract a particular audience.

Design an original book cover for the book *Travel as a Political Act* by Rick Steves. You may use any medium you like to create a front cover, spine, and back cover for the book. Your three-part cover should fit on an 8½ x 11'' page, which roughly fits the paperback version of the book we used in class. You may not use images from the outside or inside of the book, unless you re-purpose them and use them in an entirely new way.

Remember that your cover is the first thing potential readers will see; you will want to consider what audiences you want to reach and draw as many readers as possible to the book.

Present your cover to the class and explain your design; how does your cover tie in to the book? How did you choose the elements you used? What rhetorical appeals does your cover employ? How does your design encourage potential readers to pick it up? How does it meet each of the evaluation criteria below?

EVALUATION:

The best book cover designs will demonstrate:

- An understanding of and appreciation for the content of the book and its audience.
- A visually appealing arrangement of illustration(s) and text that reflects the book's content.
- Text, illustrations, and colors that are creative, easy to read, and appropriate for the book.
- A neat, polished look, with no grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors.

HOW PRACTICE MEETS PURPOSE:

This assignment gives students practice in considering audience and the persuasive appeals (61); students must think about the content of the book and who might read it. Then, they have to consider what kind of designs might appeal to that audience.

Students also have a chance to practice basic design principles (62). The instructor may choose which principles to emphasize.

Keeping the method of production open allows students as much creative freedom as they want. It does not require any particular level of technical skills or sophisticated software; students can use whatever production techniques match their skills (60). Providing significant opportunities for students to express their creativity was also recognized by Wilson and Gerber as a way to engage millennial students (56).

Appendix C

Online Reputation Summary[1]

OVERVIEW:

Students spend a lot of time connected to the Internet. In this project students learn about the trail their activity leaves and what that trail says about them to an outside observer. To prepare students for this assignment, have them read and discuss "Protecting Your Online Reputation," available at http://mashable.com/2011/11/02/protecting-your-online-reputation/. It is useful to discuss the significance of online reputations both before and after the exercise. The instructor may wish to pick the subject (classmate) for each student.

STUDENT TASK:

The purpose of this assignment is to look objectively at how a person's reputation and credibility (ethos) can be affected by information and images that are available to the online public. The assignment also provides an opportunity to use visuals to support claims made in the assessment and recommendations.

Conduct an online search for your classmate using as many social networking sites and search engines as possible. Investigate every search result thoroughly and objectively to learn as much as you can about his or her personal, work, school, and

[1] This assignment was designed by Dr. Amber Hutchins, Assistant Professor in the Kennesaw State University Department of Communication.

social life. Note whether your classmate has an online alias or if multiple people share the same name(s).

Write a two-page summary of your classmate's social media profile and reputation. Include visuals such as screen captures, downloaded photos, and text to support your assessment. Also, include actions that your classmate could take to improve his or her online reputation. (Are there inaccuracies? Do they need to change their privacy settings? Do they need to "own" more of the search results?)

If your classmate is "digitally non-existent," what impression does that give? Suggest ways to establish a positive online presence, using online reputation management experts.

EVALUATION:

The summary should demonstrate that a thorough search was completed. It should include at least two visual examples to support the summary or your recommendations. Recommendations should demonstrate a basic understanding of online reputation and should cite at least one source, in addition to the Mashable article above.

HOW PRACTICE MEETS PURPOSE:

In addition to its rhetorical value, this assignment offers a relevant life lesson for students who post much of their personal information online without considering the potential consequences. It also lets them explore "databases" that are familiar, and it provides a way for them to bring their school and outside lives together.

This assignment is an excellent way to teach the rhetorical appeal of ethos (61) as students discuss what information is available online, where it is found, and the impression it gives about the classmate.

Similarly, this assignment encourages students to look at Web sites as visual images with rhetorical content. While students often perform visual analyses on advertisements, they need to examine a broader scope of visual texts (62).

Finally, this project gives students a familiar writing assignment, which builds confidence (63), while also providing practice in using visuals to support their message.

Appendix D

Photo Essay[2]

OVERVIEW:

In preparation for this assignment, describe for students what a photo essay is and how it can be persuasive. Good instructions for creating a photo essay can be found online at Collective Lens, http://www.collectivelens.com/blog/creating-photo-essay. YouTube has several photo essay examples you may wish to view and discuss to help prepare students for this assignment.

Students will present their completed essays to the class. Instructors may choose to direct students to present their essays without commentary, so that classmates can try to identify the thesis of each essay.

After the photo essays are complete, have students discuss or write about the differences between their photo essay and a traditional written essay. Do they think one mode is more effective than the other?

STUDENT TASK:

The purpose of this assignment is learn how to make an argument using primarily visuals and to recognize that like any form of composition, this process requires planning and continuous revision.

[2] This assignment was adapted from *Envision: Persuasive Writing in a Visual World* by Christine L. Alfano and Alyssa J. O'Brien.

Create a photo essay that makes an argument about your university. Decide on your thesis before you begin taking photographs. What is it you want to say about your institution? Is there an emotion that you want to capture? How might you show that in pictures?

The final essay should include 10 – 15 original photographs; you may need to take several more than that to decide which ones work best in your final essay. Use PowerPoint or a photo editing software to create your essay presentation. You are encouraged to add music, and you may add a limited amount of text or captions, if necessary. Your essay should be between one and three minutes.

EVALUATION:

The thesis of the photo essay must be easily understood. The quality of the essay will be evident in the quality of pictures, selection of pictures, cropping and editing of pictures, how they are arranged, etc. If music is used, it should enhance the mood and theme of the essay. All text should also reflect the theme and be free from misspellings or grammatical errors.

HOW PRACTICE MEETS PURPOSE:

The photo essay teaches the concepts of rhetoric, since every step in the production process requires a deliberate rhetorical act (61).

By creating a photo essay, students learn that images can effectively substitute for words in the creation of argument (61). Here, the visual has become the primary mode of persuasion.

Photographs are ubiquitous in student life. This project invites students to use a different medium, one with which they are already familiar, to tell a story. Replacing verbal narrative with images helps students shift from writing to composing (60).

MONTYNE H. MORRIS
2472 Devon Wood Way, Marietta, GA 30066
770-924-9164 (h) 404-210-9259 (c)
montynehm@aol.com

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Professional writer and editor, drawing on 20 years of real world business experience. Experienced in full-cycle production of marketing materials and contracts, newsletters, web content, and career narratives; master's level training in professional writing and excellent competencies in Microsoft Office Suite. Solid training experience, including two years in college composition, two years in retail training and coaching, and ten years in corporate training and development.

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

- Editor of the Fall 2007 and Fall 2011 editions of *Writing Kennesaw*, a publication of the Writing Center and the First-Year Writing Program at Kennesaw State University
- Editor of the *2008 Annual Report* for the American Literature Section of the Modern Language Association
- Writer/editor of work plans, contracts, presentations, resumes, job postings and general correspondence
- Designer/producer of instructor and participant training manuals
- Author/editor of newsletters, calendars and Web sites for PTA and other community organizations

WORK HISTORY

Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA Fall 2011
Editor, Graduate Assistant

- Generated article ideas and solicited faculty authors
- Wrote original copy for feature articles; conducted faculty interviews as needed
- Solicited/edited information and articles by students and faculty
- Acted as project manager for online and print publication

Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA Spring 2010 – Spring 2011
Graduate Teaching Assistant

- Designed/delivered four classes of ENGL 1101, the first semester writing course
- Designed/delivered two classes of ENGL 1102, the second semester writing course

Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA Spring 2009
Editor, Graduate Assistant

- Compiled and edited articles and statistics for the 2008 annual report of the American Literature Section (ALS) of the Modern Language Association (MLA)
- Worked with Executive Director, committee chairs and award winners to submit necessary information
- Designed and published online report using InDesign (www.als-mla.org/2008Report.pdf)

Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA Fall 2007
Editor, Graduate Assistant

- Initiated and worked with University Relations for new logo/design for newsletter
- Wrote original features; solicited/edited information and articles by students and faculty
- Created in Publisher; published online and in print

Executive Strategies, Inc., Roswell, GA 1997 - Present
Research Manager (Part-time)

- Source networking leads and candidates for retained and contingency searches
- Identify industry associations and niche sites to reach targeted concentrations of candidates
- Maintain print and online marketing materials

Summit Performance, Inc., dba Priority Management, Atlanta, GA 1996 - 1997
Workshop Facilitator (Part-time)

- Delivered public time management workshops
- Provided individual coaching to workshop participants

Prudential Relocation Management, Valhalla, NY 1984 - 1995
Manager, Regional Education and Development (1992 – 95)

- Conducted needs assessments with managers and associates to determine training objectives
- Produced/delivered instructor-led, self-instructional, video- and computer-based training

Early positions at Prudential include **Senior Training Specialist**, **Regional Training Specialist**, **Relocation Coordinator**, and **Relocation Assistant**.

EDUCATION

B.A., Political Science
University of Georgia, Athens, GA

Pursuing Master of Arts in Professional Writing (8/2012)
Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA